A COMPLETE

HISTORY

OF THE

DRAMA,

FROM THE EARLIEST PERIODS

TO THE

PRESENT TIME.

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HISTORY

OF THE

DRAMA.

CHAP. I.

Introduction.—Tragedy and Comedy.—Origin of Tragedy.—Eſchylus.

TO trace the origin of cuſtoms, and the growth of literature in the early ages of mankind; and to follow them in their various revolutions, in different empires, is a pleaſing and a profitable employment; and not unworthy of the beſt writers.

The conſequence of the Drama is ſo well known in this kingdom, that there will need no apology for an undertaking which evidently conduces to the above purpoſes: and which propoſes to ſhew the birth of the dra-

matic poem, its gradations from infancy to maturity, in the ſeveral nations where it has flouriſhed; and to give biographical ſketches of the principal dramatic authors, from Eſchylus to our day; with critical remarks on their writings.

As the ſole motive of this work is to pleaſe and to inform, we ſhall be careful to avoid all ſceptical conjecture and critical controverſy; and ſelect only ſuch circumſtances as are moſt ſtriking orabſolutely neceſſaryfor the congruity of our hiſtory.

The Drama is divided into two diſtinct parts, Tragedy and Comedy, the former of which is the moſt ancient and the moſt noble, and took its riſe in the following manner: The worſhip of Bacchus had been brought from Egypt to Athens, and ſeveral feaſts were eſtabliſhed in honour of this deity: two of theſe in particular, were celebrated twice a year with extraordinary magnificence. After the ſacrifice, which was a goat, the prieſts and ſpectators joined in ſinging hymns in honour of Bacchus. Theſe hymns were ſometimes performed by the whole company, and ſometimes by choſen bands anſwering to each other, and forming a chorus, with its ſtrophe's and antiſtrophe's. This chorus was the firſt ſpring of the dramatic poem, which became afterwards ſo celebrated throughout Greece, and from the name of the victim τραγος a goat, joined with ωδη a ſong, aroſe the word tragedy. Theſpis who lived about 536 years before the chriſtian æra, introduced a perſon who between the ſongs made a recital in verſe relating to ſome hero of antiquity; this contributed to diverſify the entertainment, and give relief to the ſingers.

He likewiſe carried the actors in a cart, and ſmeared their faces with wine lees, whereas they uſed before to ſing in the ſtreets and fields, and without diſguiſe.

Theſpis

Theſpis fut le premier qui barbouille de lie,
Promena par les bourgs cette heureuſe folie;
Et d' acteurs mal-ornees chargeant un tomberau,
Amuſa les paſſans d'un ſpectacle nouveau *.

BOILEAU Art de Poet.

Theſe repreſentations were very pleaſing to the Athenians, and an innumerable quantity of ſpectators uſed to be preſent at them, when a new genius burſt from obſcurity and brought them to a ſtate of perfection they had never before thought of; this was no other than ESCHYLUS. This great poet was born at Athens, in the firſt year of the ſixtieth Olympiad; he was bred to the profeſſion of arms, and fought at the battles of Maratteon, Solamin and Platæ. But his ſituation not according with his genius, he left it for one no leſs glorious, and where he ſoon outſtriped every competitor. We have already ſaid that Tragedy at this time conſiſted only of the chorus, and a ſingle perſon who recited during their intervals of reſt; nor had theſe any agreement with each other, for the former related only to the god whoſe feaſt they celebrated, whilſt the latter conſiſted of any ſubject the poet choſe to repreſent. But when Eſchylus came, he gave to Tragedy a new ſoul. He perceived its deficiencies and determined to ſupply them. He began by reforming the externals of the art, he gave the actors maſks, and robes which ſwept the ground and produced a very magnificent effect: he cauſed them likewiſe to wear buſkins. Inſtead of a cart, he erected a theatre of a moderate ſize; and changed the ſtyle of declamation from the humorous and burleſque, to the ſe-

 rious

* Firſt Theſpis ſmear'd with lees, and void of art
The grateful folly vented from a cart;
And as the tawdry actors drove about,
The ſight was new and pleas'd the gaping rout.

rious and elevated. He caught the idea of his pieces from the Illiad and Odyſſey of Homer. He uſed himſelf to ſay that they were only copies in relievo of Homer's draughts. From a ſtrict ſtudy of this author he perceived how much ſuch illuſtrious ſubjects would gain by being wrought into connected plots and repreſented on the ſtage with the obſervance of time, place and action. This he accordingly undertook to perform, and ſucceeded ſo well as to be ſtiled and with juſtice, the father of the moſt natural and moſt intereſting department of poetry. The chorus had now no longer any relation to Bacchus, but were incorporated with the piece: theſe never quitted the ſtage; during the action they joined in the intereſts of the perſonages of the drama, gave them uſeful advice, and became the confidants of their ſecrets. Whilſt the action was ſuſpended, they ſang the reward of the virtuous, and the puniſhment of the wicked; deplored the miſeries of the unfortunate, or rejoiced in the good fortune of the ſucceſsful. Theſe ſongs were always the moſt poetical and ſublime parts of the Drama. The pieces of Eſchylus met with all the ſucceſs he could wiſh: in the poetical conteſts he was always victorious; and he had grown grey in honour, when a young opponent ſtarted up to tear his accumulated laurels from his brow: this opponent was SOPHOCLES. When Cymon diſcovered the bones of Theſeus, and tranſported them to Athens, a trial of ſkill between the tragic poets was appointed. Sophocles entered the liſt with Eſchylus, and was proclaimed the conqueror. The ancient maſter was ſo affected with this cruel reverſe of fortune, by which he believed all his fame to be blaſted, that he retired in diſguſt to Hiero, king of Syracuſe, the friend and patron of all the diſgraced learned. He died there ſoon after by a moſt ſingular accident. As he was ſleeping in the fields with his head bare,

bare, an Eagle who took his bald crown for a ſtone, dropped a Tortiſe upon it and killed him. The tragedies compoſed by this author are ſaid to be in number ſeventy, ſome indeed reckon a hundred; but this includes thoſe called ſatyric tragedies, in which ſatyrs acted parts: theſe were of the nature of comedy, and poſſeſſed ſcarce any thing of the tragic dignity. One of them was always added to the three tragedies compoſed for the prize of poetry, and the four pieces together were called a IC'TRALOGIE. We ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly of them in our examination of the works of Euripides.

There are but ſeven of the pieces of Eſchylus extant, we ſhall ſpeak briefly of each of them in order to convey ſome idea of his manner: they are arranged as follows,

PROMETHEUS. The SUPPLIANTS.
The SEVEN CHIEFS at the Siege of Thebes.
AGAMEMNON. The COEPHORES.
The EUMENIDES. The PERSIANS.

PROMETHEUS in Chains.

Eſchylus wrote three Tragedies on Prometheus; his Theft, his Puniſhment, and his Deliverance. The ſecond only of theſe has come down to us. In the firſt act, Force and Violence; the children of Styx, come with Vulcan from a deſert in Scythia; they have been ordered by Jupiter to bind Prometheus to a rock, for having ſtolen the celeſtial fire, and communicated it to mortals Vulcan, as the god of fire, is intereſted in the robbery; yet he heſitates to inflict this cruelty on a deity, for ſuch Prometheus is ſuppoſed to be; and weeps whilſt he pronounces the ſentence paſſed by Jupiter. Force and Violence inſiſt upon Vulcan's executing his com-

commands, and here ariſes a conteſt between Severity and Compaſſion, which is conducted in the true ſpirit of the Drama. Vulcan yields, and binds the unhappy Prometheus. The execution of this is very ſhocking. The neck of the victim is pierced with diamond nails, and every part of the puniſhment is ſo ſtrongly marked that the repreſentation muſt have cauſed the utmoſt horror. The divinities afterwards leave him, and he begins to utter bitter complaints; he calls upon the elements, the ſun and all creatures, to witneſs the injuſtice of Jupiter. He is interrupted by the arrival of nymphs, daughters of Thetis and Oreanus. They come to expreſs their grief at his misfortune, "for we "heard," ſay they, "the ſtrokes of the hammer, which "reſounded in the depths of our grottoes."

Prometheus propheſies that Jupiter will be dethroned, that he will conſult him concerning the conſpiracy, but ſhall not prevail upon him to diſcover any thing. They enquire of Prometheus the cauſe of Jupiter's anger. He acquaints them; and relates his adventures, and invites them to deſcend, for they had hitherto hovered in the air in machines. They do ſo, and form the chorus throughout the reſt of the play.

This is a brief analyſis of the firſt act, whoever wiſhes to ſee it and the reſt of the acts more fully, may conſult Father Brumoy who treats it at conſiderable length. In this piece there is more of the rudeneſs of ancient tragedy than in any other. Yet there are ſome fine ſtrokes in it not unworthy of the genius of Eſchylus. The character of Prometheus throughout is noble and intereſting, and ſome of his ſpeeches beautifully ſublime; but the language is very often obſcure, and the ſcenes extremely romantic. It is moſt probably an allegory

allegory on Kings.

THE SEVEN CHIEFS at the Siege of THEBES.

The misfortunes of Œdipus have been dramatized by each of the three Greek bards. Eſchylus has made them the ſubjects of four tragedies, viz. Laius, The Sphinx, Œdipus, and the preſent one. The conduct of this tragedy is briefly as follows, Œdipus, after marrying his mother, has by her two ſons Polynices and Eteocles; and two daughters, Antigone and Iſmena. Diſcovering afterwards his crime, he puniſhes himſelf by tearing out his eyes, and reſigns his crown to his two ſons; who aſhamed of their illicit birth impriſon their unhappy father, who ſtung at their ingratitude, predicts that they ſhall die by each others hand. The predictions of an injured perſon were implicitly relied on by the Greeks, and always ſuppoſed to have their fulfilment. To prevent or retard this dreadful puniſhment, the two brothers agree to wield the ſceptre by turns every year, and never to be both in Thebes at the ſame time. Polynices aſcends the throne, and at the end of the year reſigns it to his brother; but Eteocles having taſted the ſweets of empire, refuſes at the expiration of his term to fulfil his agreement, and ſhuts the gates of Thebes againſt his brother. Enraged at this perfidy, Polynices retires to Argos, and having married the daughter of Adraſtus its king, returns with an army of Argives to recover his kingdom. Here the piece commences; Eteocles is diſcovered giving orders for the defence of the city; he is ſurrounded by his ſubjects, whom he exhorts to defend their country with bravery; and acquaints them that a numerous army is coming againſt them: in the mean time, a ſpy whom he had diſpatched to obſerve the motions of the enemy, arrives, and tells him that he has ſeen the argive army. "I ſaw,

ſays he, the ſeven warriors ſacrifice a bull upon one of their ſhields, each dip his hands in the blood, and ſwear with horrid oaths by Mars and Bellona and the bloody carnage of war, or to lay the city of Cadmus in aſhes, or to periſh underneath its walls. Already with tears they load the chariot of Adraſtus with pledges deſtined for their friends to recall the ſad remembrance of their deaths." For Amphiarus a ſoothſayer, and one of the chiefs, had foretold that Adraſtus only ſhould return from the war. Eteocles ſupplicates the gods with all the emphatic ſtyle of Eſchylus. "O Jupiter! O ye tutelary divinities, O dreadful imprecations pronounced by my father! do not this day, by the hands of the Argives, terminate a Grecian city," &c. He afterwards retires to give neceſſary orders. The chorus compoſed of Theban virgins, now expreſs their fears, they paint all the horrors of war, they embrace the ſtatues of the gods, and call on Jupiter, Mars, Pallas and all the other deities, to ſave the city: this is beautifully deſcribed in a kind of verſe very difficult to render into our language. The cries of theſe virgins put the city in conſternation, and alarm. Eteocles, who returns and chides them with bitter invectives againſt the whole ſex. They alledge the cauſe they have for their fears, and fancy they already behold the enemy maſter of the city, they hear the claſhing of their arms, and the ſhrieks of the dying. At length they are appeaſed and promiſe to perform an hymn in honour of the gods; whilſt Eteocles chuſes ſix chiefs, who with himſelf are to oppoſe the chiefs of the Argives. The hymn of the chorus which is divided into ſtrophe's and antiſtrophe's is a ſtriking picture: it repreſents a city delivered up to be ſacked; it is full of dreadful images, murdering ſoldiers, raviſhed virgins, children killed in the arms of their mothers, and all this heightened by the pathetic action of the chorus. Eteocles enters with the ſpy, who deſcribes the

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ſix chiefs of the Argives and their mottos. Eteocles comments upon them, and names the warriors who are to oppoſe them; but coming to the ſeventh whom he is to engage, he finds him to be his brother: this reminds him of his father's prediction, and he has a melancholy preſage of the event. The chorus endeavour to perſuade him not to oppoſe himſelf to his brother, but in vain, and he quits them after a beautiful dialogue. The chorus expreſs their fears by the uſual ſong in which they lament the deſtiny of their kings.

Some time after a man comes to inform them that the city is ſafe; the Thebans are conquerors at ſix gates, but Apollo has ſeized the ſeventh to puniſh the crimes of Laius; in a word, that the two brothers have ſlain each other. At this news, they knew not whether to rejoice at their deliverance from the ſiege, or to ſorrow for the fate of their ſovereigns; the latter prevails. They lament with tears the two brothers whom a cruel jealouſy had deſtroyed: they begin the mourning with funeral ſongs. A crowd of citizens appear bearing the body of their kings. Antigone and Iſmena their ſiſters, join their lamentations with thoſe of the chorus, who divide into two bodies and ſing or ſpeak alternately, ſympathiſing with the grief of the ſiſters. "Ah (they cry) the city is filled with mourning. Theſe walls, theſe towers witneſs our grief, and the whole region weep its kings! to their ſad heirs they leave their rich poſſeſſions, the ſources of their diſcord and death the fruit they have reaped. O Jocaſta, moſt wretched of women and of mothers, who became the wife of thy own ſon to give birth to two brothers who have ſlaughtered each other! Their hatred is extinguiſhed in their blood, the kindred ſtreams mingled as they flowed, and undiſtinguiſhed ſtained the ground! O palace, filled with horrors, at length the furies have raiſed their dreadful voices to ſing the ruin of a hapleſs

race that like a dream is vaniſhed." This ſcene muſt have had a wonderful effect in repreſentation, and the language has all the beauty of real paſſion. The following is a ſpecimen of the ſublime of Eſchylus: "Vengeance fixed her ſtandard at the gate where the unnatural brothers fought, and the black dæmon that animated them relented not till both were ſlain." Antigone and Iſmena conclude theſe lamentations with a duet extremely fine; the ſong is interrupted by an herald who publiſhes a decree of the ſenate which ordains ſepulchral honours to Eteocles for having fought in defence of his country, but orders the body of Polynices to be given a prey to the birds for having beſieged it: this is expreſſed with great energy. Antigone enraged at ſo injurious a decree, proteſts that if they refuſe the funeral rites to her brother ſhe will pay them to him herſelf. The diſpute between the princeſs and the chorus grows warm, and at length is decided by the chorus. They join with Antigone, and divide into two bodies, one of which retires to perform the obſequies of Eteocles and the other thoſe of Polynices.

In deciding on the works of the ancients, we muſt make allowance for the difference of manners between their day and ours, and we ſhall then find much to praiſe in the above piece: the paſſions are always ſucceſsfully moved, and the ſuſpence is very artfully preferred throughout.

The language has all that wild enthuſiaſm which is obſervable in the infancy of ſcience and which Eſchylus poſſeſſed in a great degree. According to our rules for the drama, the cataſtrophe is complete at the death of the brothers, but it was far otherwiſe amongſt the Greeks. Their belief of the ſpirits of the uninterred dead wandering on the banks of Styx, made it a matter of the utmoſt importance that the chiefs who died in battle ſhould obtain funeral honours; and if Eſchylus had

finiſhed

finiſhed his play without deciding this, it would have been reckoned incomplete. The character of Eteocles muſt appear altogether deteſtable, and it may be thought unaccountable that the Theban ſenate ſhould decree honours to a man who had violated his oath to his brother, and refuſe them to Polynices, who is every way the injured perſon; but it muſt be remembered, that the Greeks held it the greateſt of crimes for a man to make war upon his country though ſtimulated by the moſt powerful injuries: and ſhowed great veneration for the memory of their kings.

XERXES.

ESCHYLUS was preſent at the battle of Salamin, but did not repreſent this tragedy, which is founded on that event, till eight years afterwards, under the Archon Menon. A ſimilar production had been brought on the ſtage ſome time before by Phrynicus. It ſeems that the Greeks were not ſo ſcrupulous in dramatic repreſentations in one reſpect as we are, for it is certain an event ſo recent would not be judged proper for the ſtage now, yet the preſent one was ſo glorious in its nature, and ſo remarkably to the honour of the Greek nation, and the Athenians in particular, that even allowing this delicacy we would ſcarce wonder at their overcoming it in one inſtance.

The ſcene of 'Xerxes,' is before a temple near the tomb of Darius in Suſa. The chorus is compoſed of old men appointed governors of Perſia during the abſence of Xerxes; theſe open the play. Anxious for the fate of Xerxes and the army he had led againſt Greece, they came to communicate their fears, and to deliberate proper meaſures for the ſafety of the kingdom: they draw fatal preſages from not having heard from the army. He who ſpeaks for the reſt, gives a ſuccinct account of

the great expedition, "Alas, (ſays he) the force of all Aſia is with its king! The people of Suſa, Ecbatana and Ciſſa, compoſe a double army by land and ſea."

He then proceeds to detail this enterpriſe, the chariots, veſſels, troops, &c. that compoſe the armies; and aſks the others what reſolution ſhall be taken in the uncertainty they are in. The queen now enters, ſhe proves to be Atoſſa the widow of Darius, and mother of Xerxes; ſhe comes to acquaint the chorus with a dream which had tormented her the preceeding night, and was as follows, There appeared two women, the one in a Perſian and the other in a Grecian dreſs, they ſeemed to be ſiſters; a quarrel aroſe betwixt them. "My ſon (continues ſhe) harneſſed them both to the ſame chariot; the one that repreſented Perſia, chearfully ſubmitted, but the other fierce, untractable, and unable to bear the yoke, ſtruggled to free herſelf, and at length broke the chariot; Xerxes fell to the ground; Darius was preſent, and appeared full of tender pity for his ſon. Xerxes ſaw him and tore his garments with rage and grief." Such was her dream, and what follows is ſtill more alarming. She tells them as ſhe was offering a libation to the preſerving gods, an Eagle came and took refuge under the altar of the ſun; at that inſtant a bird of leſs ſize and ſtrength, darted upon him and ſeizd him in his talons; the trembling eagle ſuffered itſelf to be torn in pieces without making any reſiſtance. Atoſſa applies this to Greece and Xerxes. The old man who ſpeaks for the reſt, neither endeavours to ſtrengthen, nor diſſipate her fear: he adviſes her to ſupplicate the gods to render favourable preſages. In the mean time a courier arrives to acquaint them of the defeat of Xerxes. His relation, which is very lively and conciſe, ſerves as an explanation of the queen's. The interruptions of the chorus are very natural and affecting.

ing. Atoſſa overwhelmed with grief, keeps a profound ſilence. At length ſhe enquires after the fate of the prince. The meſſenger tells her that Xerxes lives, and recounts the names of the principal among the ſlain. She aſks how it was poſſible for the Athenians who were ſo inferior in force to conquer? "Doubtleſs, (ſays ſhe) the gods watch over the defence of a city conſecrated to Minerva." He then gives her a beautiful detail of the action. This contains an artful panegyric on the Athenians, which Eſchylus knew well how to improve. The chorus conclude with lamenting the fate of their country. Atoſſa retires to prepare a ſacrifice to the infernal gods; ſhe lays aſide her robes of royalty, and comes unattended to the place of offering, while the chorus perform airs ſuitable to the public ſorrow. She exhorts them to invoke the ſhade of Darius, that they may conſult him concerning their calamity. They ſing, and ſhe pours her libation of milk, wine, oil, and pure water, with flowers. The ſhade of Darius riſes from the tomb. He appears with all that majeſtic ſweetneſs which rendered him ſo beloved and revered when living. He enquires of the Satrapes the reaſon of their invocations. They tremble and are ſilent. He addreſſes his wife, and aſks of her what has occaſioned the ſorrow which he beholds. She relates to him the fatal expedition; and he laments over the deſtiny of Perſia. The chorus who have by this time recovered their courage, deſire his advice. He tells them to war no more with Greece: predicts the fate of the army Xerxes had left behind him under the command of Mardonius, and which was defeated at Plate.

He cautions them againſt pride and war, and telling the queen to comfort her ſon, diſappears. Xerxes arrives with a train and appearance ſuited to his condition; he ſeems ſenſible of his miſconduct, and attributes his miſfortunes

fortunes wholly to himſelf. He ſhews the chorus his empty quiver, and they after beating their breaſts, and rending their garments and hair, conduct him to his palace, and the piece concludes.

It is not without reaſon that Ariſtophanes in the clouds introduces Eſchylus boaſting of this Tragedy. It indeed attains the true end of the drama, and to the utmoſt ſimplicity of plot joins an intereſt which is never ſuffered to abate. To the Athenians this piece muſt have been peculiarly grateful; and it is full of fine ſtrokes in praiſe of his native city. It is one of thoſe that gained the prize of poetry.

Having given ſome account of three of the pieces of Eſchylus we ſhall refer the reader to the original for the others, and proceed to ſum up the character of this poet.

It is with poetry as with the nations in which it is cultivated; it has a riſe, a maturity, and a decline. At its riſe, every thing wears the air of novelty, all nature preſents itſelf unſullied and unenjoyed, and the poet bewildered in the vaſt ſcene gives fancy its full ſcope, and ſatisfied with what is natural, is regardleſs of what is moſt proper. But as it becomes more an object of univerſal attention, the taſte refines and the judgment is placed as a curb over the imagination. It is at this time that we may expect the poetic art to be carried to its higheſt perfection; the ſtores of nature are opened but not exhauſted, and the rude efforts of former days are improved and refined upon. After this it gradually degenerates, the labours of geneius are reduced to rules, and the mind diſcouraged by the difficulty of becoming original by ſtriking out a freſh path, is content with new modelling the old ones. Hence it is a certain ſign of the decline of poetry when more regard is paid to the expreſſion than to the thought; to the ſuperficials of decoration and effect, than to the bold and ſimple energy of nature that plays

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not upon the eye and ear but deſcends immediately to the heart. We have already ſhown that Eſchylus lived at the former of theſe periods, and that he is juſtly ſtiled the father of the dramatic poem. His genius led him peculiarly to the awful and terrible, and we ſcarce ever trace in his pieces, the ſoft and tender movements of love and pity; a woman in love is not to be found in them: but a female mind agitated with violent and contending paſſions, he repreſented with wonderful effect. All his works bear a reſemblance of his warlike diſpoſition; they are rude, grand and terrible; his deſcriptions of battles are extremely animated: we ſeem carried to the ſcene of action, and to mingle with the murdering, and the murdered. His warm and lively imagination often carried him beyond due bounds, and although he reſcued the rude beginnings of tragedy from a ſtate of barbariſm. and carried them far towards perfection he ſtill left much to do. In his piece of that title he introduced the Eumenides to the number of fifty aſleep on the ſtage, and when they awoke, their appearance and geſture were ſo terrifying, that it is ſaid women miſcarried, and children died with affright. His language is extremely figurative, and his deſcriptions often unneceſſarily prolix.

But if we conſider in how rude a ſtate he found dramatic repreſentation, and that its principal perfections as it is at this day, were firſt deſigned by him, we muſt confeſs his powers to have been very great and extended, and that if his pieces do not exhibit all the refinement which may be found in the works of his ſucceſſors, he is ſtill the inventor of the art they have improved, and at leaſt their equal, though in a different deſignation.

The inconſtancy and ingratitude of the Athenians, ſo often experienced by their great men, was not wanting in their treatment of Eſchylus: He was once accuſed before the people of having in one of his pieces revealed the myſteries, and although his brother Aminias, who had

loſt his arm at the battle of Salamin, ſhewed his ſtump to the judges to move them to pity Eſchylus, would probably have been condemned if he had not clearly proved that he was never initiated in the myſteries, and conſequently could not reveal them. After his death the ſtate ſhewed him extraordinary honours; and engaged by a public decree, to pay the expences whenever his pieces ſhould be repreſented: in his life time he was thirty times victorious, and often afterwards. Having ſketched the writings and character of Eſchylus, we ſhall reſerve the account of his particula improvements of tragedy, for another chapter, and proceed to his ſucceſſors, Sophocles and Euripides.

CHAP. II.

Sophocles—his Life—Writings—Character.

SOPHOCLES, was the ſon of Sophilus a citizen of Colona in Attica; either a blackſmith, or the maſter of a blackſmith's ſhop, a diſtinction of ſome conſequence as to his condition, the latter being much more reputable than the former. Sophocles was born in the ſecond year of the twenty-firſt Olympiad; like Eſchylus he was bred a ſoldier, and ſo ſignalized himſelf that he was appointed joint commander of an army with ericles. But his poetical fame has eclipſed his military, and he is generally eſteemed the chief of the dramatic poets. He was firſt the ſcholar of Eſchylus and afterwards his competitor and conqueror. At an advanced age, his children weary of his governance, accuſed him of imbecility, and required that he ſhould have a guardian put over him. When it was his turn to make his defence, he only begged leave to read to his judges his Oedipus at Colonæ; which he had

had lately compoſed. The people were ſo charmed with it, that they diſmiſſed his accuſers with diſgrace, but conducted him to his houſe with ſhouting and clapping of hands, as they were wont after he had gained the prize of tragedy. He was crowned twenty times, and was often invited to the courts of neighbouring monarchs, but conſtantly refuſed to leave his country. The occaſion of his death is differently related: ſome ſay that he was choaked by a grape-ſtone; others that an effort to pronounce a very long period in his Antigone, occaſioned his death; and others, that he died with joy, at ſeeing himſelf crowned upon a day when he did not expect it. Upon his tomb was engraven a ſwarm of bees, in alluſion to the ſweetneſs of his numbers, which had gained him the denomination of 'the bee,' and given birth to the fiction, that bees ſettled upon his lips when in his cradle. He was ninety years old when he died, and had been contemporary with Eſchylus and Euripides, and outlived them both. He is ſaid to have compoſed one hundred and ſeventeen pieces, of which ſeven only have eſcaped the devaſtations of time; they are as follows,

The TRACHINIANS.	AJAX *diſtracted.*
KING OEDIPUS.	PHILOCTATES.
OEDIPUS *at* COLONA.	ELECTRA.
ANTIGONE.	

We ſhall give the reader an analyſis of three of theſe pieces in the ſame manner as we have thoſe of Eſchylus.

The tragedy of Oedipus is a perfect model for dramatic compoſition; it preſents an aſſemblage of all the beauties of ſubject and execution, united in one great whole. But it deſerves a more particular examination.

The plot is moſt beautifully conducted, and the intereſt and ſuſpence wonderfully preſerved; the opening

of the piece is very fine; the prieſts, the people, the children of a great city, all aſſembled round the altar and the king; all with one common voice imploring the gods, to deliver them from their calamity; and looking up to their king as the inſtrument of deliverance. The character of Oedipus is very artfully unravelled; at firſt he appears the good king and father of his ſubjects; but in the interview with Tireſias we diſcovered the ſhades of his good qualities; his haughtineſs and impetuoſity: This too conduces to the heightening of the plot; for whereas the coming of Tireſias ſeems to promiſe the diſcovery of the fatal myſtery by his unwillingneſs to declare it till provoked by the menaces of Oedipus, his affirmation loſes all its effect, and makes Oedipus imagine that it is a concerted plot between Creon and Tireſias, to rob him of his crown. In the ſcene between Oedipus and Creon, we are ſtill more diſguſted with the obſtinacy of the former; and the moderation and reaſon of Creon is finely contraſted with the blind intemperance of Oedipus. The alternate hope and fear of Oedipus, forms an exquiſite ſuſpence, and the peripities the moſt perfect that could be; for the change of ſituation is the immediate conſequence of the diſcovery: the unity of time, place, and action are all ſtrictly obſerved. There is but one fault that can be found with this play. It is not to be ſuppoſed that Oedipus ſhould be married ſo long without knowing the manner of Laius' death: but this is a fault which could not be got over, as the foundation of the plot depended upon it; and Ariſtotle thinks it may be excuſed, as Sophocles with great judgment has left this circumſtance out of his piece.

ELECTRA.

Agamemnon king of Mycene and Argos, being choſen general of the Greeks in the expedition againſt Troy, was forceds

forced to ſacrifice his daughter Ipheginia to Diana, whom he had offended, and who would not otherwiſe grant the fleet a favourable wind. Clytemneſtra makes this a pretence to murder him at his return, for the ſake of Ægiſthus her paramour, the couſin-germain of Agamemnon, and who afterwards uſurped his throne. When Agamemnon returned from Troy his wife received him affectionately; but upon his coming out of the bath, threw a robe over him and whilſt he was entangled in it, murdered him.

All that Electra the daughter of Agamemnon could do on this occaſion, was to preſerve the young Oreſtes her brother, whom ſhe ſent out of the kingdom, that he might one day avenge his father. Electra ſuffered a long time the cruelty of her tyrants: after an abſence of twenty years Oreſtes returns, and here the piece commences.

The ſcene diſcovers Oreſtes, his Governor and Pylades, juſt arrived at Mycene; the Governor points out to Oreſtes, the palace of his father; and the illuſtrious places in the city. He tells Oreſtes that it was he, who after the death of Agamemnon, received him from his ſiſters and conveyed him to a place of ſafety. They then concert their method of revenge, and Oreſtes ſays thus, "Fully determined to revenge the murder of my father, I had recourſe thou knoweſt to the oracle of Delphos. Take vengeance on the murderers, ſaid the god, but do it privately.—Let art and ſecrecy be to you inſtead of arms and forces. Such was the anſwer of Apollo—go then (*to the Governor*) under the auſpices of this oracle; ſeize the fortunate moment when it offers itſelf, gain acceſs to the palace; obſerve what paſſes there, and return to us with thy intelligence.—Say that thou art a native of Phocis, ſent by a friend of theirs at Panope, to bring them the news of Oreſtes' death.—Aſſure them that he fell from his chariot in the Pythian games," &c. They

retire, and Electra appears who thus pathetically laments her misfortunes. "Oh thou pure light of heaven, which encompaſſes the globe, the conſtant witneſs of my complaints. Oft haſt thou beheld me ſtrike this bleeding boſom; but alas! thou ſeeſt only the remainder of my agonizing nights. Wrapt in the ſhades of darkneſs, my couch, my melancholy couch, the only confident of my woes, my tears flow inceſſant for the horrid fate of a loved father. The god of war ſpared him in battle: but his wife and the treacherous Egiſthus, more inhuman than Mars, murdered their king: he fell under their repeated blows, as an oak falls under the ſtroke of the wood cleavers axe. Yes, I will weep for him as long as the ſun and ſtars ſhall ſhine on me. Like Philomel deprived of her children, I will make this palace reſound with my lamentations. Ye gloomy regions of the dead, where Pluto reigns—oh Mercury, by whom the ſouls of mortals are conducted to the ſhades of hell;—oh goddeſs of dreadful imprecations; and you, oh, daughters of the gods, tremendous Eumenides, you who behold murder and adultery with horror, fly, oh fly to my aſſiſtance! Deign at leaſt to reſtore to me my brother, my Oreſtes. For thus alone, without comfort or ſupport, I can no longer bear the weight of my misfortunes." The chorus compoſed of the principal ladies of Mycene now join her and endeavour to comfort her, the urge that her ſorrow is uſeleſs, and that ſhe ſhould truſt to the gods for revenge.

Chryſothemis her ſiſter appears: ſhe is a different character from Electra, ſhe ſupports the death of her father without complaining, and is complaiſant to his murderers; ſhe blames her ſiſter for indulging her grief, and tells her that ſhe will fall a victim to her imprudence; Electra retaliates and accuſes Chryſothemis of puſillanimity and want of love for the memory of her father. Chryſothemis relates the cauſe of her coming; "Clytemneſtra

neſtra it is reported, has ſeen this night, thy father and mine, aſcending from the regions of the dead. The ſcepter which paſſed from his hands into thoſe of Egiſthus, Agamemnon planted in this palace, and ſuddenly a flouriſhing branch grew out of it, which overſhadowed all Mycene. I learnt this from a perſon who heard her relate her dream to the ſun.—This is all I can acquaint thee with.—And terrified by her viſion ſhe has ſent me to the tomb of her huſband. Hear me then I conjure thee, ſiſter; by the gods of our anceſtors, do not ruin thyſelf by thy imprudent tenderneſs. For if thou rejecteſt my councils now, thou wilt hereafter in ſpite of thyſelf, wiſh thou hadſt followed them, when perhaps it may be too late." Electra now urges her not to pollute the tomb of her father with infamous libations, but to bury them in the earth; and to offer in their ſtead both their hair and her girdle; the chorus join with her, and Chryſothemis promiſes to do ſo. The chorus now prophecy that the furies will revenge the murder of Agamemnon. Clytemneſtra and Electra appear; the former upbraids the latter with making injuſt complaints of ill-treatment, and endeavours to excuſe the murder of Agamemnon. Electra replies, and a ſcene of altercation enſues, which ends with Clytemneſtra approaching the altar, where ſhe ſupplicates Apollo to render her dream favourable. She is addreſſed by the Governor who comes to acquaint her of the death of Oreſtes, which he very exactly relates; this fills Electra with grief, but Clytemneſtra is ſecretly pleaſed and retires with the Governor. The chorus join to lament the ſad death of Oreſtes in a very pathetic interlude which begins thus; "Oh Jupiter! where are thy thunders? Oh ſun! where are thy darting fires? Can you ye equitable gods, behold theſe horrors and let your vengeance ſleep?"

KING

KING OEDIPUS.

Whether we conſider Oedipus as his misfortunes are related by the tradition of the Greeks, or as he is repreſented by the dramatic poet, he preſents the moſt excellent character for tragedy, that ever the world has afforded. Suppoſed to be ſubject by inevitable deſtiny to the accidents which happen to him, we are prevented from accuſing, by the ſacredneſs of the cauſe, and the mixture of good and evil in his character modulates our pity, whilſt it excites our terror; for although his calamities are accounted to be unavoidable, yet they appear to be brought upon him by his curioſity, pride, and raſhneſs. We have before ſaid that this ſubject has been treated by each of the three dramatic poets, but by none ſo excellently as Sophocles: and his king Oedipus, is eſteemed the maſter-piece of tragedy.

Laius, king of Thebes, was told by the oracle that he ſhould be murdered by his own ſon, who ſhould ſucceed him on the throne, and marry his mother. To avoid theſe evils, Laius as ſoon as the child was born, delivered him to one of his ſervants with orders to ſlay him. But he compaſſionating his helpleſs condition, gave him to a ſhepherd of Polybus king of Corinth, who carried him to his maſter; and Polybus having no children, adopted him as his own. Oedipus being grown up, chanced to meet his real father, and a quarrel enſuing betwixt them killed him. At that time there was a dreadful peſtilence in Thebes, which was not to ceaſe until ſome one ſhould expound the Ænigma of Sphynx, which many eſſayed to do in vain. At length Oedipus expounded it, and the Thebans in gratitude made him king and gave him the wife of Laius in marriage. Sometime after the gods ſent a dreadful plague, upon the Thebans. The opening of the piece diſcovers Oedipus the high-prieſt; the principal

principal citizens; and a crowd of children, before an altar raiſed in the middle of the court of the palace of Oedipus: The high prieſt deſcribes the affliction and miſery of the land, and Oedipus informs him that he has ſent Creon his wife's brother to the temple of Apollo, to enquire of the god what they muſt do to reſcue the city. Creon now appears, having juſt returned; he had received from the god a command to find out the murderer of Laius, who was then in the city, and to put him to death or baniſh him from Thebes: upon this, Oedipus enquires the circumſtances of Laius' death, and is told, that all his attendants had been murdered with him except one, who reported that he was attacked by a company of robbers, and fell, overpowered by numbers.

Upon, this Oedipus orders that all the means ſhould be taken to diſcover the murderer, and retires with the high prieſt; the chorus compoſed of the citizens, remain and ſing the calamities of Thebes, and implore the gods to aid them in ſeeking the murderer. "Great Jupiter, at whoſe command the thunders roll, ſtrike this malignant Genii with your bolts. Oh, Lycian Apollo, bring to our aid thy bow, thy golden quiver, and inevitable darts. And thou, O Diana, hurl at him thoſe fierce beams which like flaming arrows thou darteſt upon the mountains of Lycia; be at length propitious to our vows, thou god that deigneſt to bear the name of Theban. Thee whom we adorn with a golden tiara, oh chief of the Bacchanals, powerful Bacchus, bring hither thy flaming torches, and free us from this horrible divinity."

Oedipus now appears, with the people aſſembled by his order; he acquaints them with the command of Apollo, and charges them to uſe their utmoſt endeavours to diſcover the criminal; offers if he will diſcover himſelf, that he ſhall only ſuffer baniſhment, but pronoun-

ces the moſt dreadful curſes upon him, if he conceals himſelf: he acquaints them, that at the deſire of Creon, he has ſent meſſengers to the prophet Tireſias, who by his ſkill in divination might reveal the ſecret. Tireſias now joins them, and Oedipus requeſts him to declare the murderer of Laius; but he refuſes, ſays it will be fatal to Oedipus, and beſeeches him to deſiſt from his requeſt. The other perſiſts, and exaſperated at the obſtinacy of Tireſias upbraids and threatens him; till at length he declares Oedipus to be the murderer: Oedipus, enflamed with rage, accuſes Tireſias and Creon, who had adviſed the ſending for him, of a conſpiracy againſt his life and throne.

The chorus divided between love for Oedipus, and reverence for Tireſias, know not what to think, at length they incline to Oedipus. Creon joins the chorus, and expreſſes his abhorrence of the crime Oedipus had charged him with: Oedipus appears, and perſiſts in his accuſation, till Jocaſta hearing the diſpute, comes out and prevails on him to pardon Creon: this naturally leads us to the prophecy of Tireſias; and Jocaſta, to ſhow Oedipus how little reliance is to be placed on the oracles, relates that of Laius, who told that he ſhould be killed by his own ſon, in a place where three ways met: upon this, Oedipus enquires the ſituation of the place, where Laius met his death, his perſon, and the number of his attendants; and ſtruck with the agreement of the circumſtances with the perſon he met and killed, coming from Corinth, he believes he is the murderer of Laius; and orders the man who had eſcaped to be ſent for. He now gives Jocaſta ſome account of himſelf, in the following words; "The ſon of Polybus and Merope his queen, I held the firſt rank in Corinth, my native country. I was the hope and expectation of the Corinthians; when one day an adventure happened, with which I had reaſon

to

to be ſurprized—A man heated with wine, had the inſolence to tell me, I was a foundling, and not the ſon of Polybus and Merope. Enraged at this affront, I complained of it to the king and queen. Their reſentment was not leſs than mine. My tenderneſs and reſpect for them ſtruggled with my fears and ſuſpicions. But this reproach was deeply impreſſed on my heart. I left the court, and went to the temple of Delphi to conſult the god. Apollo, inſtead of anſwering me, predicted to me the moſt horrible misfortunes. The deſtinies, ſaid the oracle, have decreed that Oedipus ſhall be the murderer of his father, the huſband of his mother, and beget an execrable race. Terrified at this dreadful oracle, and to avoid the poſſibility of accompliſhing it, I reſolved never more to return to Corinth. I regulated my journey by the ſtars, and arrived at the place where you ſay Laius was murdered. Ah, Jocaſta, ſcarce had I reached that fatal place, where the three roads join, when I was met by a herald, and a perſon ſuch as you deſcribe Laius to be, ſeated on a chariot. They would have forced me to give them way. Tranſported with rage, I ſtruck him by whom I was inſulted: his maſter gave me two blows, and felt the effect of my reſentment; with one ſtroke he was deprived of ſenſe and motion, and trembling from his chariot expired at my feet. His attendants died alſo by my hand. If I have killed Laius, then oh gods! is there a wretch ſo curſed as I am? Oh height of miſery! oh wretch abhorred! Have I not polluted the bed of him I ſo cruelly maſſacred? and whither ſhall I fly? baniſhed from Thebes, whither ſhall I now direct my ſteps? ſhall I return to Corinth and incur the guilt of parricide and inceſt? ſhall I murder Polybus and marry Merope?" &c.

Jocaſta comforts him, and endeavours to remove his fears by reminding him that the ſaved attendant had declared that Laius was killed by a number of robbers:

this comforts him, and he and Jocaſta retire. The chorus expreſs their indignation at the impiety of Jocaſta, who had contemned the oracles, but they do it obliquely and without naming her. Jocaſta is ſeen going to the temple of the gods, and acquaints the chorus that Oedipus is afflicted with melancholy thoughts. Whilſt ſhe is imploring the gods to remove his preſages, a Corinthian ſhepherd approaches, and enquires for the King: he is the ſame that received Oedipus when an infant, and brought him to Polybus. He comes to acquaint him that Polybus is dead; the queen is rejoiced to hear it, and ſends in all haſte to acquaint Oedipus, who joins them and is comforted by the news. The ſhepherd then acquaints him that he is not the ſon of Polybus, Oedipus is ſurpriſed, and enquires the manner of his diſcovering it; and is anxious to find out his parents, but Jocaſta who begins to ſuſpect the truth, endeavours in vain to diſſuade him from it. The chorus now congratulate Oedipus, and flatter him in a very beautiful verſe, with the hopes of being the ſon of one of the deities. The ſhepherd who had delivered Oedipus to the ſhepherd of king Polybus, is now arrived, and after many threats from Oedipus, diſcovers that he is the ſon of Laius. Oedipus now exclaims; "'Tis done; the horrid myſtery is unveiled; I am the murderer of my father, the huſband of my mother—my deſtiny is fulfilled—Oh ſun, theſe eyes ſhall never ſee thee more." The chorus then lament the misfortunes of their kings; of Oedipus; and the inſtability of human happineſs. A meſſenger now comes to tell them that Jocaſta had killed herſelf, Oedipus torn out his eyes, and was demanding to have the palace gates thrown open that the Thebans might behold his wretchedneſs; they are thrown open, and Œdipus comes forth and laments his miſery. Creon joins him and endeavours to prevail on him to go into the palace; Oedipus requeſts

to

to be baniſhed the city, and Creon ſays that the oracle had commanded it, but that from reſpect and compaſſion, he would again conſult the god. Oedipus deſires to ſee his children—they are brought to him, and he laments over them moſt pathetically: he again deſires to be baniſhed, and Creon promiſes him. The chorus conclude the piece with the following words, which contain the moral; "You ſee this king, oh, Thebans! this Oedipus, whoſe penetrating wit reſolved the dark enigmas of the Sphinx; this Oedipus, whoſe power equalled his wiſdom, who was indebted to himſelf alone for all his grandeur. You ſee into what an abyſs of miſery he is fallen. Learn hence, blind mortals, to turn your eyes upon the cloſing ſcene of life, and pronounce none happy but ſuch as without misfortunes have reached that awful moment."

(From an error of the compoſitor's, the laſt ſheet of this hiſtory has been much diſarranged; we muſt therefore requeſt our readers to obſerve the following order. After the ſentence in page 19, *ending with the word Eſchylus, follows King Oedipus; at the concluſion of which, place the ſentences immediately following that mentioned in page* 19. *In page* 21. *Electra is broken off unfiniſhed; we now proceed in it.)*

ELECTRA *continued.*

Afterwards they are joined by Cryſothemis, who in all haſte comes to acquaint her ſiſter, that Oreſtes is returned. This ſhe gathers from the following circumſtances. "Scarce (ſays ſhe) had I arrived at Agamemnon's tomb, when I beheld freſh ſtreams of milk running from the top of the ſepulchre, and the ſepulchre itſelf adorned with flowers of every kind. Aſtoniſhed at the ſight, I

looked round me to see if any person was concealed there. I saw no one: all was quiet. I drew near to the tomb, and at the bottom I discovered, several locks of hair, which appeared to have been lately cut off. Instantly the idea of him who is most dear to us, Orestes, rose to my thoughts. I recollected that air, those features, which are ever present to my mind, and the longer I gazed upon these monuments of his filial piety, the more was I persuaded by a secret presage that I was not mistaken. From whom should such gifts come? From thee or me? From me I am sure they did not; nor from thee. Who could have carried them thither? Thou hast not the liberty of going even to the temples of the gods: and Clytemnestra it is well known, is not disposed to make such offerings; and surely she would not have made them unknown to us. Ah doubtless, they came from Orestes. Be comforted then, Electra. The gods do not persecute the unfortunate for ever. This day may perhaps be the source of long felicity to us." Electra pays no regard to these signs, but attributes them to some friends of Orestes; she acquaints her sister of the account of his death, and both of them join their lamentations; till Electra, animated with a courage above her sex, proposes to sacrifice Egisthus to the manes of her murdered father. She enforces her proposition by all the eloquence that could be suggested; and in an heroic strain shews the honour which will be accorded to them by posterity for their pious action. Crysothemis, with her usual timidity, objects their weakness, and refuses to join in the attempt, and after much disputing, they part in anger. The chorus again lament the fate of the Atrides. Orestes and Pylades approach, the former bearing the urn which is supposed to enclose his own ashes. He enquires of the chorus to direct him to Egisthus, to whom he brings news of Orestes. Electra upon this, renews her enquiries and

ſorrow, till after a moſt beautiful ſuſpence, Oreſtes acquaints her firſt, that her brother is not dead, and afterwards that it is him with whom ſhe is converſing. Her joy is now equal to her former grief, and ſhe ſcarce reſtrains it, to concert the death of the murderers. The chorus prophecy ſucceſs, and Oreſtes leaves them to ſeek Clytemneſtra, who is ſoon after heard behind the ſcene calling for aſſiſtance, imploring compaſſion, and ſinking beneath the fatal knife. Oreſtes and Pylades come forth with bloody hands, and proclaim her death. They retire on hearing the footſteps of Egiſthus, who enquires for the meſſengers who had brought the news of the death of Oreſtes: Electra ſays they are within the palace, with the dead body. He orders the gates to be thrown open, that the people may view it. The gates are thrown open, and a body covered with a cloth is ſeen by Egiſthus, which on being uncovered appears to be the corpſe of Clytemneſtra. Egiſthus now perceives his deſtiny; he endeavours to move Oreſtes to compaſſion, but without effect: he is forced into the chamber in which he murdered Agamemnon, and is there put to death.

A modern reader will probably make great exceptions to this tragedy; the idea of a ſon and daughter imbruing their hands in the blood of a parent, is full of horror; and not all the palliating circumſtances which in this inſtance preſent themſelves, ſeem capable of juſtifying it. But a moderate knowledge of the manners of the Greeks, will ſhow that with them it was eſteemed otherwiſe: The command of an oracle ſuperſeded all the ties of nature and affection. This circumſtance likewiſe was real, and therefore is not imputable to the poet. In other reſpects this piece is full of beauties. It is of that nature which Ariſtotle calls implex, in which virtue is rewarded and vice puniſhed. The opening is very fine, it prepares us for all that follows without anticipating it.

it. The characters are bold, ſtriking, and various; the ſuperior virtue and firmneſs of Electra, is finely contraſted with the weakneſs and effeminacy of Cryſothemis. In the dialogue between Electra and Clytemneſtra, the arguments of the former are finely made to overpower thoſe of the latter, which appear the mere ſubterfuges of wickedneſs. The diſcovery of Oreſtes is extremely pathetic, and nothing could be more artfully managed. The expreſſion of the paſſions in their various operations, is one of the three Greek Dramatiſts principal excellencies; we could give innumerable inſtances; there is one in the preſent piece ſo exquiſite that we cannot forbear tranſcribing it. It is when Clytemneſtra receives the account of the death of Oreſtes; "Oh Jupiter! (ſays ſhe) what ought I to think of my ſon's fate? Ought I to call it fortunate or deplorable? To me indeed it brings a real advantage; but oh how unhappy am I to purchaſe the preſervation of my life by new misfortunes—I am a mother, and therefore wretched—A mother, however injured, cannot hate her child." Whoever contemplates the character of Clytemneſtra, and reads this paſſage, if he does not feel a uniſon of ſentiment, he muſt be totally devoid of feeling, not to mention taſte.

PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES, the friend and fellow-traveller of Alcides, who at his death bequeathed to him his unerring arrows, having followed the Grecians to the ſiege of Troy, in his way thither is ſtung in the foot by a ſerpent; which the Grecians imagining to be from the anger of the gods, they leave him in the iſle of Lemnos while he is aſleep. Here he continues for ten years, a cave his only habitation, and the beaſts his only companions.

But

But the oracle having declared that Troy could not be taken without the arrows of Hercules, Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus, the ſon of Achilles, are deputed to fetch their poſſeſſor, Philoctetes, from his miſerable ſituation. Here the piece commences; the opening diſcovers Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus, juſt arrived at Lemnos. Ulyſſes ſpeaks thus: "At length we behold the ſhore of Lemnos. It was here, oh, ſon of Achilles: it was in this deſert iſle that, by order of the aſſembled Greeks, I left the miſerable Philoctetes. The wound which conſumed him, like a devouring fire, forced from him horrid cries. The camp inceſſantly reſounded either with his groans, or thoſe imprecations which he uttered in the violence of his torture. The ſacrifices were diſturbed.---But why do I repeat all this to thee? The time we loſe in this diſcourſe will betray me; and the ſtratagem I have contrived to take Philoctetes away with us, will certainly fail, if he diſcovers my arrival in this iſland. Thou, Neoptolemus, muſt aſſiſt my deſign. Look round for the cave, which ſerves him for a retreat. Thou wilt know it by theſe marks: it is open on both ſides; ſo that in winter it gives a double entrance to the rays of the ſun, and during the fervid heats of ſummer, the ſoft breathngs of the winds invite repoſe. On the left, and a little below it, is a ſpring of pure water. Go ſoftly towards this cave, and let me know whether Philoctetes be within it. I will at leiſure unfold to thee the myſtery of our enterprize, and we will unite our endeavours to ſucceed in the execution of it." Neoptolemus ſays, that he perceives a cave, which proves to be the one ſought for. Ulyſſes orders a ſoldier to aſcend an eminence, and watch the arrival of Philoctetes, that he may not ſurpriſe them; for, ſays he, "Of all the Greeks, Ulyſſes is he whom it would moſt gratify his revenge to ſee at Lemnos." He then proceeds to impart

his deſign to Neoptolemus; he then endeavours to perſuade him to deceive Philoctetes; to ſay, that having been refuſed the arms of his father, Achilles, he has left the Greeks with indignation, and is returning to his own country. Neoptelemus ſtartles at the propoſition; he declares himſelf incapable of treachery; and chuſes rather to forego his hopes of taking Troy: Ulyſſes urges the intereſt of his country; the innocence of the artifice; and the impoſſibility of ſucceſs by any other means; till at length Neoptolemus yields to his perſuaſions, and they ſeparate; the one to wait the arrival of Philoctetes, and the other to go to the ſhip and take further meaſures to enſure their deſign.

The chorus compoſed of Greeks, in the ſervice of Neoptolemus join in converſation with him, and enquire how they ſhall conduct themſelves towards Philoctetes. He inſtructs them in his ſtory, and they lament his mournful conditions. They are interrupted by groans. "The groans, (ſay they,) which ſtrike our ears, ſeem to be thoſe of a man who drags himſelf along with pain. It is Philoctetes without doubt. His complaints may be heard even here. Be prepared, Prince. He approaches ---he is come. Inſtead of the pipe's cheerful ſound, which from afar declares the arrival of the ſhepherds, his piercing groans and cries are heard. Ah! certainly he has hurt himſelf, by traverſing ſome rugged road. The ſight of a veſſel ſo near this deſert ſhore has induced him to go and implore aſsiſtance." Philoctetes appears, and addreſſes them in the following affecting language. "Oh! ſtrangers, who are ye? What diſaſter has brought you to this uninhabited iſland? What is your country? Of what nation are ye? I know that Grecian habit, that habit which is ſtill ſo dear to me. Oh why do you delay to let me hear your voice? I long to find upon your lips a language which I had ceaſed to ſpeak.

ſpeak. Be not leſs terrified at the ſight of an inhabitant of this wild ſolitude, than moved with compaſsion for a wretch who has no reſource, and ſees himſelf abandoned by gods and men. If you come as friends, ſpeak, and give me that ſatisfaction, at leaſt, which no man can, with juſtice, refuſe another; anſwer me, and hear me in my turn." Neoptolemus acquants him who he is, and from whence he comes. Philoctetes is rejoiced; he enquires after the ſtate of the army; laments the death of many chiefs, and imprecates Ulyſſes and the Atridæ. He implores Neoptolemus, not to leave him, but tranſport him to ſome hoſpitable ſhore. Neoptolemus ſeems to conſent, and they are going to prepare for their departure, when two Greeks, purpoſely ſent by Ulyſſes, appear. One of them is diſguiſed as a merchant; he pretends that he has juſt left the Grecian fleet, and is come to inform Neoptolemus, that he is purſued; he ſays too, that Ulyſſes and Diomede, having been informed by Helenus, the ſoothſayer, that Troy could not be taken without the arrows of Hercules, have come in queſt of Philoctetes, in order to bring him thither. Philoctetes urges Neoptolemus to depart, leſt they ſhould be ſurpriſed by Ulyſſes; he conſents, and they enter the cave to collect ſome neceſſaries. The chorus then expatiate on the innocence and ſufferings of Philoctetes, and rejoice in his ſuppoſed deliverance. "Soon (ſay they) will his miſeries be ended. In the ſon of Achilles the gods have ſent him a generous friend. Philoctetes, after this long, this melancholy abſence, ſhall ſee again his native country: again he ſhall behold the nymphs of Melis, lead up the ſprightly dance: the plains, watered by the river Sperchius, again ſhall meet his raviſhed eyes, and Mount Oeta, from whence Alcides aroſe from ſurrounding flames to bright Olympus."

Philoctetes and Neoptolemus appear; Philoctetes is in an agony; he tells Neoptolemus that his pain ſeizes him at ſtated times, when his torture is inſupportable: he conjures him to cut off his foot; and confides to his care the bow and arrows of Alcides, which Neoptolemus promiſes faithfully to return. His pain now riſes to madneſs; he calls for death, and throws himſelf upon the earth; till at length he becomes eaſier, and a gentle ſlumber ſeizes him. The chorus invoke the god of ſleep to continue his ſerenity, and conſult with Neoptolemus how they ſhall diſpoſe of him. They have juſt determined to carry him to the veſſel, when he awakes. He riſes, and, with the aſſiſtance of Neoptolemus, goes toward the place of embarkation: Neoptolemus, who had already begun to repent having deceived him, is embarraſſed; Philoctetes perceives it, and enquires the reaſon, when honour, juſtice, and compaſſion, overcoming his intereſt, he reveals the whole deſign. Philoctetes upbraids and conjures him; and Neoptolemus is ſtill undetermined, when Ulyſſes appears: the ſight of his enemy aggravates the paſſion of Philoctetes to diſtraction; he endeavours to throw himſelf off the rock, but is prevented. Ulyſſes finding him reſolved not to go with them, forces Neoptolemus with the arrows of Alcides to return to the ſhip. The chorus only remain with Philoctetes, to perſuade him to accompany them to Troy. He is inexorable; "No, (ſays he) I will not be prevailed upon: my reſolution is taken. No, though Jupiter ſhould ſtrike me with his thunders, I will not yield. May Ilion, may the army periſh, may they all periſh by whom I have been made a ſacrifice!" He goes into his cave. Neoptolemus is ſeen approaching Philoctetes; Ulyſſes following him demands the cauſe: he tells him it is to reſtore Philoctetes

tes his arrows; Ulyſſes expoſtulates, threatens, but in vain, and Ulyſſes retires in anger. Neoptolemus joins Philoctetes, and aſſuring him of his repentance, reſtores him the bow and arrows. Ulyſſes ſuddenly appearing, proteſts againſt it: Philoctetes is going to pierce him, but is prevented by Neoptolemus, who addreſſes him thus: "Learn, prince, that thy wound is a ſtroke from heaven, for having approached the ſerpent who was guardian of the riches of the temple which we found at Chryſa. The cure of thy diſtemper is reſerved for the ſons of Eſculapius, as the taking of Troy is to our common efforts, and the arrows of Hercules, which thou poſſeſſeſt. Thou mayſt aſk by what means theſe wonders were made known to me? Know then, that the Trojan Helenus, that prophet ſo celebrated, is priſoner in the camp. It is he who has unfolded this myſtery. If thou bringeſt back Philoctetes, (ſays he) the fate of Ilion will be determined before the approaching ſummer. Take my life, ye Greeks, if the oracles I deliver prove untrue. 'Thus certain of ſucceſs, canſt thou doubt whether thou oughteſt to yield to our entreaties? How glorious for thee to be of all the Greeks, the only one judged worthy to accompliſh theſe great decrees of fate! Be not inſenſible to the happineſs of life and health renewed, and to the glory of ſubverting Troy." Theſe arguments have no effect; his hatred of Ulyſſes and the Atridæ, is more powerful than every other conſideration. At length Neoptolemus, unable to conquer the reſolution of Philoctetes, reſolves to forſake the Greeks, and return with him to his own country: he is about to do this, when Hercules deſcends to them on a cloud, and ſpeaks thus: "Stay, go not yet.——Philoctetes, look up, and know Alcides: thou ſeeſt, thou heareſt him. For thee I have quitted yon azure vault; I come to de-

clare

clare to thee the orders of Jupiter, and to point thee out another road. Stay then, and hear me. Thou knoweſt what labours I have undergone, and all that I have ſuffered to acquire that immortality I now enjoy. Learn that the ſame deſtiny awaits thee. Thou muſt go to Troy with the ſon of Achilles; thy wound ſhall be cured. Thy valour ſhall procure thee the chief honours in the army; with my arrows thou ſhalt kill the haughty Paris, the author of the war. Troy ſhall be conquered by thee, and thoſe rich ſpoils with which thy valour ſhall be rewarded, thou ſhall ſend to Poeas, thy father, upon Mount Oeta. For me thou ſhall reſerve the preſents of the army, and place them upon my tomb, as a monument of the victory purchaſed by my arrows. As for thee, oh! ſon of Achilles, I declare that thou canſt not conquer without Philoctetes, nor Philoctetes without thee. Go forth then like two lions who ſeek their prey together. I will ſend Eſculapius to Troy, to cure Philoctetes. Twice have the gods decreed that my arrows ſhall conquer Ilion. But when you ravage this wealthy country, remember to venerate religion. Piety is more grateful to Jupiter than all things elſe. All elſe muſt die; but this ſhall live for ever. It follows us to the tomb, depends not on our fate; but whether we live or die, it is immortal." Philoctetes yields to the dictates of Alcides; and having taken a tender farewell of the objects in the iſland, embarks for Troy; and the piece concludes.

The plot of this tragedy is very ſimple, yet very intereſting; it involves no leſs than the fate of a mighty kingdom. Philoctetes is a ſecond Achilles; diſeaſed and powerleſs, he preſerves all the haughty dignity of his character; and it requires no leſs than the preſence of a deity to ſhake his reſolution. The Greek dramatiſts

ſeem

ſeem to have had an extraordinary opinion of the power of contraſt; almoſt all their pieces preſent it. In this tragedy it is finely exemplified in the characters of Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus; the one artful, prudent, and of cold affections; the other open, raſh, and eaſily moved. Yet this contraſt is not gained by ſacrificing nature; nothing could be more probable than that the Greeks ſhould depute the moſt powerful, and the moſt prudent man, on an enterpriſe which eſſentially required both theſe qualities. The complaints of Philoctetes, his enquiries after the chiefs in the army, and his exclamations againſt Ulyſſes, and the Atridæ, are peculiarly beautiful, and the progreſs of the ſtratagem, its retardation when nearly ſucceſusful, by the ſudden torture of Philoctetes, and its fatal miſcarriage upon the deſertion of Neoptelemus, occaſion a very intereſting ſuſpenſe, which is not diſſolved until the concluſion of the piece; when the ſudden deſcenſion of Alcides, concentrates the different intereſt, and produces wonder, magnificence, and ſatisfaction.

From theſe ſpecimens it will be readily perceived, that the genius of Sophocles conſiderably differed from that of Eſchylus; his plots are more artfully managed; his characters more natural and dignified; and his language more diffuſe and luxuriant.

He greatly improved the plan which Eſchylus contrived, and it is from his pieces that the rules of Ariſtotle are principally formed; indeed none of his ſucceſſors, either in ancient or modern times, have left ſuch a combination of all the natural and artificial beauties of dramatic compoſition. He uſed to ſay, that he would firſt change that grand height of invention in Eſchylus; ſecondly, his melancholy and laborious diſpoſition; and thirdly, his particular kind of elocution. His private cha-

character is variouſly related; ſome report him to have been very debauched *; whilſt others endeavour to reſcue him from the imputation †. Upon the whole, it appears that he was an honeſt citizen, and one that reverenced the gods.

CHAP. III.

Euripides—His Life—Pieces—Character.

EURIPIDES was born at Salamina, in the ſecond year of the ſeventy-fifth Olympiad. Athens was then in its meridian glory; the victories of Salamin and Platæ which were gained this year had intoxicated a people naturally vain. Euripides, by the perſuaſion of his father Mneſarchus, applied himſelf to philoſophy. His maſter was the celebrated Anaxagoras, who ſome time after having affirmed that the ſun was only a ball of fire, could with difficulty ſave himſelf from death. The intereſt of Pericles, (who ſupplicated his pardon with tears) at length prevailed, and his puniſhment was mitigated to baniſhment. This treatment intimidated Euripides ſo much, that he left the philoſophic ſchool for

* *Sophocles and Euripides, in their private character, were very debauched. Eſchylus and Ariſtophanes loved wine, and never compoſed but when intoxicated. Sophocles ſaid, "I know Eſchylus that you ſucceed; but you do well only when you know not what you do."*

Atheneus, Dip. lib. x.

† *Being aſked his opinion of love, he anſwered, "That he had run away from him, as from a cruel and unmerciful maſter.*

Plat. Repub. lib. i.

for the more inviting profeſſion of poetry; for which he had before diſcovered ſome inclination; and he ſucceeded ſo well, that he became the antagoniſts of Eſchylus and Sophocles. With the latter of theſe he quarrelled in his youth, but was afterwards reconciled, and his intimate friend. Their correſpondence is preſerved in five letters attributed to Euripides, but it is doubtful whether they are not ſpurious:

When his fame increaſed, he was invited by Archelaus, king of Macedonia, to his court, and received with extraordinary favour. Some of his ſayings, whilſt with this prince, are recorded. Being rallied by him one day, for not bringing a preſent on his birth day, as all the other courtiers were accuſtomed, he ſaid, "To give to you would be to ask from you." Another time, being deſired by Archelaus to celebrate him in one of his tragedies, "Heaven grant (ſaid he) that nothing ever happens to you that may be a ſubject for tragedy." A vulgar fellow reproaching him for having an offenſive breath, he replied, "It proceeds from having many ſecrets buried in my breaſt." After having reſided three years in Macedon, being one day alone, in a retired place, he was attacked by a number of dogs, who tore him ſo dreadfully, that he expired a little time after, at ſeventy-five years of age. The Athenians ſent to require his body, but the Macedonians conſtantly refuſed it, and buried him near Arethuſa, in a magnificent tomb, on which they ſay, the thunder alighted, as it had done on that of Lycurgus. The Athenians erected a monument to him, engraved with his name. He wrote ſeventy-five tragedies, of which eighteen are remaining, viz.

Ion	*The Suppliants*	*The Heraclides*
Medea	*Iphigenia at Aulis*	*Electra*
Hippolitus	*Rheſeus*	*Oreſtes*
Alceſtes	*The Trojans*	*Andromache*
Hercules mad	*Heculia*	*Iphigenia at Taurica*
The Phœnecians	*The Cylop*	*Helen.*

HIPPOLYTUS.

Theſeus, the eleventh king of Athens, having, for politic reaſons, murdered his relation Pallas, in expiation, baniſhed himſelf from his kingdom for a twelvemonth, and retired with Phedra, his wife, to Træzen, a city of Peloponneſus, where Hippolytus, his ſon by an Amazon, was educated by the ſage Pittheus.

The opening ſcene diſcovers Venus deſcended at Træzen, who ſpeaks thus, "Am I that celebrated Venus, in heaven ſo honoured, ſo adored on earth? Do I beſtow bleſſings on thoſe who own my power, and quell the inſolence of thoſe haughty rebels who dare deſpiſe it? And ſhall the ſon of Theſus, this offſpring of an Amazon, this pupil of the proud Pittheus, ſhall he alone, of all the citizens of Træzen, conſider me as the meaneſt of the divinities? The haughty youth deſpiſes love and marriage; ſatisfied with paying honours only to Diana, whom he exalts above the other goddeſſes, he pretends to be exempted from human frailties. Diana has all his adoration; with her he haunts the foreſts, and knows no other care but how to let looſe his dogs upon the trembling animal he purſues. Perfidious pair, I do not envy ye. Why, why indeed, ſhould Venus envy ye? But Hippolytus is guilty in my eyes; and this is ſufficient to arm my vengeance. This day ſhall it fall upon him, a vengeance long before pepared. When he left the houſe of Pittheus, to be preſent at a ſacred ceremony at Athens, Phædra, his father's wife, beheld and loved him; it was I who kindled in her breaſt this flame. The abſence of Hippolytus increaſed it: ſhe built a magnificent temple, and conſecrated it to me, in hopes of being cured; but ſcarce had Theſeus

ſeus quitted the land of Cecrops*, bathed in the blood of the Pallantides †; ſcarce had he entered this country, to perform his vow of baniſhment ‡, when Phædra, bathed in tears, and ſtruck with a diſeaſe which ſhe conceals, is ſeen to conſume away in ſilent anguiſh. Theſeus ſhall be acquainted with the whole myſtery. The enraged father ſhall load his ſon with horrid imprecations. Neptune has promiſed to grant him three wiſhes. The gods will doubtleſs hear him, when he invokes his vengeance on the youth, and thus ſhall our enemy periſh. Phædra, indeed, is my faithful votary: it matters not; ſhe too muſt periſh. I do not hold her life ſo dear to ſave her with the loſs of my revenge. Innocent as ſhe is, I muſt ſacrifice her, that the guilty youth may not eſcape me: and ſee, he returns from the chaſe. His numerous train join in the hymns he ſings in honour of Diana: he ſings; the victim ſings, and knows not that the gates of death are open to receive him: knows not, unhappy wretch, that this is his laſt day. Hippolytus appears, ſinging as the goddeſs had ſaid; his followers join with him to celebrate Diana. He ceaſes, and places a garland of flowers upon her ſtatue; his ſpeech is extremely characteriſtic, both of himſelf, and of the manner of Euripedes: "Suffer me, O goddeſs, to place this crown upon thy ſtatue §. Deign to accept it from the hands of thy Hippolytus. The flowers which compoſe it I gathered from a ſmiling meadow, where no ſhepherd dares conduct his flocks: ſacred receſs, which no rude iron yet has violated: only the bee in ſpring may wander over it; a pure ſtream waters the flowery ground, and virgin modeſty reigns ever

* *The firſt king of Athens.* † *The deſcendants of Pallas.*

‡ *This was a cuſtom among the Greeks.*

§ *It is perhaps from this ſcene that Hippolytus is called,* ΕΤΕΦΑΝΗΦΟΡΟΣ, the bearer of a crown.

there. To those only it is open, who have acquired the virtue of which thou art so fond, not from empty study, but from nature herself. They are at all times permitted to gather these charming flowers, prohibited to the prophane. Disdain not then, O bright divinity, to let this crown adorn thy flowing hair, this crown formed by chaste hands. Of all mortals, I only enjoy the precious privilege of offering thee this gift. With thee do I possess all my days; with thee only do I converse: and although my eyes behold thee not, yet often do I hear thy voice divine. O goddess, grant that my life may end as it has begun."

He is joined by one of his officers, who conjures him not to neglect a goddess, the goddess Venus, lest she should punish him for his indifference. Hippolytus says, that men chuse their gods, and their friends, from inclination, and that he loves not those divinities who need shades and darkness. He orders the feast to be prepared, and his horses got ready for the exercise. The chorus, composed of ladies of Traezan, enter. They say, that they have heard Phædra is sick, and that a secret grief preys upon her. That for three days she has languished without food and rest, resolving to die. They endeavour to penetrate the cause of her affliction, and alternately attribute it to the anger of Diana; to the pangs of jealousy; and to the pains of approaching childbirth. They perceive an aged woman approaching; it is Phædra's nurse, leading her mistress out of the palace. They join them. The confidant laments the miseries of mortals, the distress of her mistress, and wonders that life should appear desirable when so full of trouble. Phædra speaks: "Raise me; support me—Alas! my friends, my strength forsakes me. Ah, these idle ornaments sit heavy on my head: away with them. Let these neglected tresses flow upon my neck."

Her

Her confidant in vain endeavours to ſoothe her: ſhe raves, wiſhes to be tranſported to ſome pleaſant ſtreams; to ſeek the ſtag upon the mountain, or tame the ſteed in the chariot race. Then laments what ſhe has ſaid, and calls for her veil to hide her bluſhes. The chorus enquire of Phædra's confidant the cauſe of her miſtreſſe's grief: ſhe ſays ſhe is ignorant of it, and cannot prevail on her to diſcloſe it, but will again endeavour to diſcover it. She conjures Phædra in the moſt affecting manner, to repoſe a confidence in her; Phædra refuſes for ſome time, but at length reveals her paſſion for Hippolytus. The confidant is ſtruck with horror; but, recovering herſelf, applies herſelf to comfort Phædra, and prevails on her to permit the curing of her paſſion by means of Philtres, which ſuperſtition had introduced among the ancients*: Phædra conjures her not to make it known to Hippolytus, and ſhe promiſes ſhe will not. The chorus are left alone, and bewail the miſeries of love in a verſe which begins thus; "O love, deſtructive love! thou whoſe ſoft poiſon ſteals through the eyes into the heart!—thou, who infuſeſt deceitful pleaſures into thoſe boſoms wounded by thy darts! Ah, let me not behold thee armed with all thy fires! The ſtroke of thunder, the lightning's awful flaſh, are not ſo fatal as the envenomed ſhafts ſhot by the ſon of Jupiter and Venus." Phædra enters; ſhe is alarmed by a confuſed noiſe, which ſhe finds to be Hippolytus venting his rage on her confidant, who had diſcloſed the love of Phædra. They appear, and he upbraids the confidant, threatning to diſcloſe the inceſtuous paſſion, and pronounces a moſt bitter

* *They were of two kinds; one to inſpire love, another hatred. Over the drugs which compoſed the Philtree, ſome ſign was made, or ſome word uſed by the beloved object pronounced; to theſe was added ſome ſign, or word of the lovers, ſaying, 'Thus Phædra loves Hippolytus,' or 'Thus Phædra hates Hippolytus.'*

bitter invective againſt women. Phædra laments her ſhame, and curſes her confidant who pleads her ſincerity, and retires in great affliction. Phædra now declares her reſolution to die, and goes to prepare the means. The chorus ſhew their grief in the following beautiful words: "O that I could be tranſported to the top of ſome high mountain, or that changed into a bird, I might wing my flight over the Adriatic ſea, and to the banks of the Po, where the unhappy ſiſters of Phæton ſhed amber tears. I would fly to the rich gardens of the Heſperides, thoſe nymphs, whoſe melodious voices raviſh the ear; in a country, to which Neptune denies the frighted mariners a paſſage; for its limits are the heavens, by Atlas ſupported. There flow eternally from the palace of Jupiter the bleſt ſources of Ambroſia: and there the earth, fruitful in celeſtial riches, produces bleſſings which add to the felicity of the gods. Oh Cretan veſſel, which o'er the boſom of the ſea wafted our queen; thou receivedſt her from a happy, flouriſhing houſe, to conduct her to the deluſive joys of an unhappy marriage. Oh port of Attica, thou beheldeſt the cords which faſtened the ſad veſſels to thy ſhores, from whence ſhe paſſed into our regions. She came, and black preſages came along with her: wounded by the relentleſs hand of Venus, her boſom burned with lawleſs love, and now ſhe falls a victim to her misfortunes by her own hand ſhe dies; dies in her nuptial chamber. She abandons herſelf to her ſad fate; and now preparing to extinguiſh with her life her guilty fires, ſhe reſolves to carry all her glory with her to the dead."

One of Phædra's women appears; ſhe conſults with the chorus whether they ſhall endeavour to prevent her deſign, when an officer is heard behind the ſcenes directing her dead body to be laid out. At this inſtant Theſeus enters, and hears of his wife's death; he orders

the body to be brought forth, and laments over it in the moſt pathetic manner. He perceives a letter lying by her, which ſhe had written to be revenged on Hippolytus; and upon reading it, exclaims thus: "Though horrible to thought this guilt, I cannot, I will not conceal it. Know then, citizens of Træzan, know that Hippolytus, oh gods! Hippolytus, fearleſs of heaven's avenging thunders, has dared ——— to attempt the violation of his father's bed. But ſwift and ſure revenge is mine.———Neptune, thou haſt promiſed to grant three of my wiſhes; now then accompliſh one, one only, and I remit the others—puniſh my impious ſon this day. Thus, by the ſpeedy vengeance, thou wilt grant me, thus ſhall I know the ſincerity of thy promiſes."

The chorus knowing his error, endeavour to make him retract his raſh prayer, but in vain. Hippolytus enters, and a moſt beautiful ſcene enſues between him and his father. Theſeus orders him into baniſhment inſtantly, and retires. Hippolytus laments his ſituation. "All hope is loſt; my ſentence is irrevocable. Wretched as I am, I dare not prove my innocence. Oh daughter of Latona, divinity by me ſupremely worſhipped! Oh, my ſoft conſolation, divine companion of thoſe only pleaſures in which I indulged my guiltleſs youth; ah, never more muſt I return to Athens! But it is not Athens, it is not the land of Erectheus which I regret; it is thou, Træzan, it is thou, delightful ſcene of all my innocent amuſements, which I quit with grief. Receive my laſt farewell! Hippolytus ſhall never more behold thee!—And you, my virtuous friends, to whoſe ſweet ſociety Træzan owed its charms, ſupport me, oh ſupport me with your tender conſolations!—Conduct this wretched exile hence; and be aſſured, though accuſed, though baniſhed by a relentleſs father, I am innocent."

The

The chorus pour forth the moſt exquiſite complaints for the loſs of Hippolytus, and aſcribe his misfortunes to his irreverence of Venus. An officer in all haſte enquires for Theſeus; he brings him the news of his ſon's death, which he thus relates.

"Myſelf with the reſt of his attendants, were near the ſhore, buſy in the care of his ſteeds: tears flowed from every eye; for already had we heard the afflicting news of his baniſhment. Hippolytus came to us, at length his grief confirmed the fatal tidings. He was followed by all the youth of Traæzen, who mourned his fate with ſighs and tears. The prince, ſtifling his ſorrow turned towards them, Why, ſaid he, do you lament my exile thus? my father dooms me to it, and I obey. Harneſs the horſes to my chariot, Frazen and I muſt part. His orders were inſtantly obeyed; the chariot was brought, he threw himſelf into the ſeat, and graſping the reins, he raiſed his eyes and hands to heaven: Oh, Jupiter, cried he, if I am guilty, let thy thunders ſtrike me dead; but whether I live or die, let my father be convinced that he has puniſhed me unjuſtly. At that moment he laſhed the fiery ſteeds; we followed the chariot at a little diſtance, and took the road to Argos and Epedaurus. Scarce were we entered the deſert, when a ſhore over againſt Frazen, and near the ſaronic gulph, offered itſelf to our view. Here on a ſudden, we heard a horrid noiſe, which proceeded from the boſom of the ſea, no leſs terrible to mortal ears, than the voice of Jupiter himſelf, the ſovereign maſter of the gods. The horſes ſtarted back, their hairs and ears roſe with affright; amazement ſeized us; yet we were curious ſtill to know the cauſe of what we heard. Long we were not left in doubt. We turned our eyes towards the ſhore, and beheld a wave riſe to ſuch an enormous heigth that it hid Corinth, Epedaurus, the temple of Eſculapius, and the rocks of Seiron from our view. Still its bulk increaſed; it reached the

clouds;

clouds; and advancing to the ſhore, which it covered with its foam, there burſting like a ſtorm, it left upon the ſand a furious monſter, an enormous bull, whoſe horrid bellowings made all the neighbouring coaſts reſound: a ſight ſo full of terror, no human eye e'er yet beheld. The horſes were inſtantly ſeized with affright. The young prince, ſkilful in the art of managing a chariot, ſuddenly graſped the reins, and, ſtraining back, drew them with all his force, as a pilot directs his helm. But the terrified courſers champed the bit; and now grown furious, they no longer knew either the chariot, the reins, or their maſter's guiding hand. When the prince directed his courſe along the plain, ſuddenly the monſter preſented himſelf before the horſes, who, wild with fear, ran back; if their maſter turned them towards the rocks, the monſter glided by the ſide of the chariot, to precipitate their courſe. At length the wheels were cruſhed againſt the rocks, the chariot was broke to pieces, and Hippolitus overthrown. The ground was ſtrewed with the fragments of the broken chariot. Mean time the unhappy prince, bound and entangled in the reins, was dragged along the rocks, which bruiſed his head, and mangled all his limbs. "Ah, ſtop, he cried in a moſt moving tone, ſtop, my loved courſers, whom this hand ſo often has fed! ah, know your maſter, and do not become my murderers. Oh, my father, this is the effect of thy moſt fatal imprecations! haſten, ſaid he to us, haſten, and ſuccour an innocent, though wretched ſon." Alas, eager to give him help, we needed not his cries to animate us: but our feet ill ſeconded our zeal to ſave him. At length, diſentangled from the reins, which by ſome happy chance were broke, Hippolitus, ſcarce breathing, lay extended on the ground. At that inſtant, the horſes and the monſter diſappeared behind the mountains. Alas

oh Theſeus, I am devoted to thee as my maſter and my king, yet will I dare to ſpeak the truth; ſo well I know the virtue and innocence of Hippolytus, that although the whole ſex ſhould, like Phœdra, die, and fill Mount Ida with letters like thoſe ſhe left behind her, I never could be perſuaded that ſuch a ſon was guilty." The recital of ſo dreadful an accident, ſpite of his hatred for the ſuppoſed traitor, revives a father's tenderneſs. He deſires that he be brought before him: "I would ſee him once more; to reproach him with his crime, and complete his conviction by his puniſhment itſelf." Diana enters and ſpeaks thus to Theſeus: "Son of Egeus, behold Diana, who condeſcends to ſpeak to thee: Oh wretched Theſeus! thy ſon unjuſtly dies: Phedra by her ambiguous letter has deceived thee, and thou art miſerable. Oh thou inexorable father, call on the ſhades of hell to hide thy ſhame, or wiſh to be transformed to a bird, that thou may'ſt fly far from this land, which cries for vengeance on thee! The good, the juſt, and merciful, will no more hold commerce with thee. Hear me; I will unfold the fatal myſtery. Alas, it will indeed have no other conſequence, but to fill thee with a vain regret; yet this, even this, will be ſome ſatisfaction to me. Know then, thy ſon is innocent; he carries with him to the tomb an uncorrupted virtue. Know too, that Phedra loved, to madneſs loved the chaſte, the hapleſs youth. Yes, Theſeus, thy queen was the victim of a goddeſs, who ever was an enemy to Diana, and to all whoſe hearts are pure. Phedra burnt with an impious flame, but armed her reaſon againſt her love. Her confident, without her knowledge, acted all the reſt. Poſſeſſed of Phedra's ſecret, ſhe diſcovered to Hippolitus her execrable paſſion, having firſt bound him by an oath to ſecrecy. The prince trembled with horror; yet ſuch was his piety, ſuch his regard to the ſanctity of

his

his oath, artfully extorted from him, that when the ſentence of his death was pronounced by thee, he kept the fatal ſecret in his boſom, though inevitable ruin was the conſequence. As for thy wife, her fears of being diſcovered dictated that horrid ſtratagem to her, by which thy ſon is murdered, and thyſelf made miſerable for ever. Thy father Neptune promiſed to accompliſh three of my wiſhes: Ah wretch, that curſe which ſhould have had thy fierceſt enemy for its object, fell on thy innocent ſon. Not for this horrid purpoſe did the too indulgent deity laviſh theſe favours on thee: and the thanks thou payeſt are to offend thy benefactor, and Diana. Thou who haſt deſpiſed our oracles, and inſtead of leaving it to time to diſcover whether thy ſuſpicions were juſt or not, thou with wild rage haſt haſtened thy revenge, and by thy horrible imprecations haſt murdered thy guiltleſs ſon." Theſeus convinced of his crime, begs inſtant death as expiation: She tells him his crime deſerves no pardon, but that he may ſtill obtain it: That theſe miſeries were occaſioned by the enraged Venus, and ſuch is the eſtabliſhed law, that no deity oppoſes the deſigns of another. Hippolitus is borne in. "Oh torture inſupportable! mangled with wounds I die, and by a father's order—it is done—it is paſt—Ah what racking pains pierce through my head! convulſions tear me! Bear me no farther friends. Oh let me reſt a moment. Alas! my chariot, my courſers which I bred myſelf, and fed with my own hand—See the reward of all my cares—they have murdered me. Ah, I conjure you, in the name of the gods, touch not my wounds; do not increaſe my torture by your cruel ſuccour. Raiſe me gently, and bear me from the preſence of a father, whoſe fatal error has undone me. Oh Jupiter, this Hippolitus diſtinguiſhed for his piety, his untainted innocence, ſees himſelf reſerved for a moſt cruel

death.—Ah what availed it to him that he was virtuous? My pains increaſe; touch me not, my friends—I will have no aſſiſtance but from death—Oh you torture me with your barbarous help—which of you will give me a ſword? Oh that I could cut the thread of my miſerable days. Fatal imprecation! fatal crimes committed by my fathers, who have dipped their hands in blood! The puniſhments that were due to them, fall all united on a wretch: but why, why upon the innocent? Oh gods! what ſhall I do? how ſhall I deliver myſelf from torments which make themſelves be felt even by my mind? Oh night eternal, the peaceful ſlumber of the dead fall upon me, and put a period to my pains."

A very affecting ſcene then takes place between Hippolitus and Diana. She laments the ſad effects of the relentleſs rage of Venus, who thought herſelf deſpiſed by Hippolitus, and the purity of his heart had offended the haughty power. Diana then leaves him after thus addreſſing him: "Hippolitus, thy piety coſts thee thy life; but unrevenged thou ſhalt not die; nor ſhall the cruelty of Venus remain unpuniſhed. His hand ſhall pierce her favourite's heart*; and I have decreed, that your unfortunate virtue ſhall be rewarded. Trœyen ſhall laviſh honours on thee; her virgins, long ere they approach the altars of the god of marriage, ſhall offer at thy tomb their ſhining hair, and pay the tribute of their tears. Thou ſhalt be the laſting tribute of their ſongs; and Phedra's paſſion, to which thou falleſt a victim, ſhall never be forgot in future ages.—Theſeus, embrace thy dying ſon: ſpite of thyſelf, thou haſt condemned him: for when the gods permit the crime, how is it poſſible to avoid being guilty? Hippolitus, forgive thy father: it is I who command thee to forgive and love him. Adieu, unhappy youth

* *Adonis, who was beloved by Venus.*

youth: I am not permitted to pollute my eyes with the ſight of death, or to be witneſs of the laſt ſighs of the dying*. The fatal moment approaches faſt. Adieu." Theſeus and Hippolitus embrace. Theſeus entreats abſolution of his ſon of his crime, or expiring he will leave him a heart polluted with a crime†. Hippolitus ſwears by Diana he abſolves him for his death, and after an affectionate parting with his father expires, and the piece concludes.

IPHIGENIA *at* AULIS.

IN the time of the Trojan war, twelve hundred Grecian ſhips prepare to ſet ſail: they are detained in the port of Aulis. Agamemnon, to obtain favourable winds, ſacrifices his daughter. Euripides ſuppoſes that this young princeſs was preſerved by Diana, the goddeſs to whom ſhe was to be ſacrificed, and tranſported into Tauris, while another victim fell under the ſacred knife. This idea ſeems to have taken its riſe from Abraham's ſacrifice of his ſon, confounded with that of Jephtha's daughter. The ſcene at the opening of the piece diſcovers Agamemnon and an old man, one of the officers of his houſhold. Agamemnon deſires his attendant to follow him to a gate which he points out: The old man enquires what new proſpect has broke his ſlumber at ſo early an hour? "Why Agamemnon haſt thou left thy tent ſo ſoon?

* *The living were veiled, that they might not behold any one expire, and thought themſelves polluted by coming near the dead.*

† *The Pagans of antiquity believed they were expoſed to the wrath of Nemeſis, the Goddeſs of Vengeance, if the innocent perſon whom they oppreſſed did not abſolve them from the crime and puniſhment due to it, by pardoning them.*

ſoon? when ſilence and repoſe reign over Aulis; even the centinels ſeem oppreſſed with ſleep? retire again, my prince, I beg thee." Agamemnon laments the wretchedneſs of all the votaries of grandeur, and envies the calm bliſs of thoſe who live remote from noiſe and tumult, without glory, and without care. The old man ſeems ſurpriſed that greatneſs is not deſirable. Agamemnon ſays, "O falſe luſtre; honours how vain, how empty! While in purſuit, what charms does fancy give them; but when they are poſſeſſed, they are found full of miſery. In a rank like mine, if we obey not the cruel orders of the gods, if we yield not to the caprices of men, we are equally unhappy." The old man tells him that theſe complaints are neither juſt, nor worthy of a mighty monarch. "Didſt Atreus, thinkſt thou, give thee birth to poſſeſs pure and unmixed bliſs? Oh mortal, joy and grief are equally thy lot! Such is the decree of fate, and all muſt yield to it. Yet thou prince, weareſt out the night in reſtleſs inquietude; thou ſitteſt by a torch's feeble ray, ſometimes employed in writing a letter, ſometimes in eraſing what thou haſt written; thou ſealeſt it; thou openeſt it again, and then with haſty rage thou throweſt it away, and weepeſt. Yes, thou didſt ſhed a torrent of tears: and ſee, the fatal letter is ſtill in thy hands; ſurely grief and irreſolution have weakened thy reaſon. What is it that afflicts thee? What new misfortune has happened to thee? Tell me, I conjure thee: let my long tried faith move thee. Haſt thou forgot the rank in which Tyndarus placed me with thy queen?" Agamemnon anſwers, "Hear then the cauſe of that grief which now oppreſſes me. Thou knoweſt, that of the three daughters of Leda, Phœbe my queen, Clytamneſtra, and Helena, the latter drew the vows of all the Grecian princes, and

was

was likely to be the fatal ſource of bloody diſcords among the projected lovers.

Tyndarius foreſaw this, and was a long time doubtful, whether he ſhould fix his choice; at length he thought of an expedient to prevent thoſe miſeries he feared: he Prevailed upon the rivals to embrace, to pour libations on the burning victims, and to bind themſelves by the moſt ſacred oaths, to aſſiſt the husband of Helena, whomſoever that husbaud ſhould be, with all their forces, againſt any one who ſhould attempt to rob him of her; to purſue the raviſher, whether Greek or Barbarian, to lay waſte his dominions and deſtroy his capital. All bound themſelves by a mutual oath.

Tyndanus, after this engagement, refuſed to nominate the husband of his daughter himſelf; but left the choice to her—She fixed on Menelaus. Oh that he had never been her choice! Soon after the youngprince, who, it is reported, decided which was the moſt beautiful of the three goddeſſes, came to Lacedemon, with all the pomp of Phrygian magnificence--He loved Helena and carried her with him to mount Ida. Menelaus, enraged at this affront, claimed the performance of his rival's oaths. The Greeks took up arms, and aſſembled in Aulis, with veſſels, bucklers, chariots, and all the equipage of war; they eſpouſed my brother's quarrel, and elected me their general. Fatal dignity! why did it not fall into other hands? The impoſſibility of ſailing detained the impatient army long upon the ſhore. Calchas was conſulted, but kept a melancholy ſilence, at length he anſwered that a victim muſt be ſacrificed to the tutelary divinity of this place, and that victim muſt be - - - my daughter Iphigenia;---ſuch is the price by which we muſt purchaſe favourable winds, and the glory of ſubverting Troy. Struck with aſtoniſhment and grief at this diſtracting oracle, and fully determined not

to ſacrifice a victim ſo dear to me, I ordered Talthibius to disband the army; but the arguments of Menelaus at length prevailed: I ſigned the barbarous ſentence—I wrote to the queen and commanded her to bring her daughter with the utmoſt ſpeed to Aulis, where ſhe was to be given in marriage to Achilles. I extolled the merit of this young hero, and to haſten Clytemneſtra, I ſaid, that he would not ſail to Troy without the title of Iphigenia's husband. It was thus that I concealed from the unhappy mother the intended ſacrifice of her daughter under the diſguiſe of marriage. The fatal ſecret is only known to Calchas, Ulyſſes, Menelaus, and myſelf; but at length a father's tenderneſs has prevailed, in this letter which thou haſt this night ſeen me ſo fold and open, I have revoked my former order; take it then, and fly with it to Argos---Yet ſtay, I know thy fidelity and affection for my queen and family, I will confide to thee what I have written."

"Receive, oh Clytemneſtra, from thy husband, an order very different from the former, ſend not thy daughter to Aulis; her marriage is deferred till a more convenient time."

The old man aſks him if the fiery Achilles, when he finds himſelf diſappointed, will not fly to revenge. Agamemnon tells him that Achilles lends his name without knowing it, that he is ignorant of the intended ſcheme of the marriage, and that he did not know that Iphigenia was deſtined for his bride before the oracle was pronounced. He begs the old man to fly to the queen, nor let ſleep retard him in his progreſs, and above all deſires him when he comes to the roads which divide to different paths, to obſerve by the traces of the wheels whether his daughter has taken that towards the Grecian veſſels; and if he ſhould find the chariot to turn back the horſes to the road of Argos. The old man begs him to rely on his fidelity,

and

and aſks for a token by which he may find credit with the queen—Agamemnon anſwers, "Here, take my ſeal, which I have uſed to the letter thou beareſt to the queen; Aurora begins to appear, and the ſun's bright chariot approaches; go and relieve me from this anxiety. Alas, how fatally am I convinced that no mortal can be called happy before his death!"

The ſecond act opens with the old man and Menelaus: the old man demands the letter which Menelaus had rudely torn from him and opened—Menelaus tells him that it contained ruin to the Grecian cauſe, and that he will not part with it—The old man will not leave it in his hands—Menelaus threatens him with a ſpeedy death for his preſumption: he anſwers, "To die for my maſter is honourable—Oh, Agamemnon, where art thou? we are betrayed—Menelaus is deaf to the voice of juſtice, and forces thy ſecret from me." Agamemnon and chorus enter—he enquires the cauſe of his cries?—the old man demands to be heard firſt. As it is not proper for him to be a witneſs of the quarrel between two kings, he withdraws. Agamemnon enquires of Menelaus in what the old man had offended him? he anſwers, "Firſt look upon me if thou dareſt." Agamemnon replies, "Am I a King, and the Son of Atreus, and ſhall I tremble before thee! ſhall I not dare to meet thy looks?" Menelaus produces the letter, and demands if he knows it. Agamemnon will not explain, till he reſtores it—Menelaus will not reſtore it till the Greeks have ſeen its contents. "And wilt thou dare to open it, then?" Menelaus anſwers, "I will, and to mortify thee ſtill more, the crime which thou haſt ſo ſecretly committed ſhall be made public now; thy weakneſs will ruin us." Agamemnon replies, "And thy indiſcretion will be fatal to me. An incautious tongue is a very dangerous evil." Menelaus ſays, "A wavering mind

is worſe: it is unjuſt, it is baſe---let not the violence of thy temper make thee hate the truth, which thou ſhalt hear from me. Recal to thy remembrance the time when thou with ſo much ardor wiſhedſt to be elected general of the Grecian army in the Trojan war: even thy refuſal to accept this dignity but thinly veiled thy ambition to be poſſeſſed of it. How popular wert thou then! how laviſh wert thou of thy favours! thou gaveſt free acceſs to whoever deſired it, or deſired it not; thy palace was open to all. It was thus that by affability and gentleneſs thou didſt purchaſe of us the rank to which thou art raiſed: and how didſt thou reward us afterwards, when thou hadſt attained the ſummit of thy wiſhes, thou inſtantly altered thy conduct; thou wouldſt no longer be known to thy friends; acceſs to thee became difficult; thou livedſt in a ſolitary ſtate, and ſcarce wert viſible to any one—Was ſuch a change worthy of a king, to whom power ſupreme had been confided? Oughteſt thou not rather to have been ſo much the more conſtant in thy friendſhip, as fortune had enabled thee to be generous? Now thou knoweſt my firſt ſubject of complaint, and thy firſt error. When thou didſt ariſe in Aulis, and the whole army with thee, the angry gods denied us a favourable wind: the Greeks, weary of this delay, ſolicited thee to ſend away the fleet, and not to continue any longer idle in Aulis. What was to become of thee then? what title would ſound pleaſing in thy ear, when thou hadſt loſt that of king of kings, the command of a thouſand ſhips, and of a powerful army, ready to pour upon the Trojan fields? "What ſhall I do?" ſaidſt thou to me, "What reſolution ſhall I take?"—Thou trembleſt, own the truth; thou trembleſt, leſt thou ſhould be deprived of that high rank which ſo greatly flattered thy pride. Calchas ſacrificed to the gods, and promiſed us a happy voyage, provided Iphigenia

was

was offered up a victim to Diana. To this thou didſt conſent; thou ſenteſt, voluntary thou ſenteſt (therefore plead not violence in this caſe) and order to thy queen to ſend her daughter hither, on pretenee of marrying Achilles. I atteſt Jupiter and this air the witneſs of thy words; and now when thou art called upon to perform thy promiſes, thy mind is altered; thou writeſt clandeſtinely to thy queen, and thou determineſt not to ſacrifice Iphigenia; but thus it generally happens.---Nothing ſeems too hard for men to perform, who aim at power and honours, which they often obtain from the ſuffrages of the blind multitude. This power, and theſe honours, once poſſeſſed, they ſhamefully recoil; yet not without reaſon; ſince they feel themſelves unable to ſupport the weight of that ſupreme grandeur to which they are raiſed, and of nobly ſerving the public. As for me, I am more concerned for the intereſt of Greece, than for my own. It is the misfortune of Greece, which I lament. Diſappointed in her hope of taking a glorious revenge upon a barbarous nation, ſhe ſees her conqueſt ſnatched from her hands, and inſtead of being their terror, becomes their jeſt. Thou, Agamemnon, art the cauſe of this diſgrace. Never ought wealth to be a ſufficient motive for conferring on any man the command of a city or an army—A general ought to be diſtinguiſhed for his fortitude. Any man who poſſeſſes that quality, is able to hold the reins of government."

The chorus lament the terrible effects of quarrels between brothers, when Agamemnon anſwers: "It is now my turn to complain; and I ſhall do it by a juſter title, and in fewer words; in this, more moderate towards my brother, than he has been to me; for moderation ever accompanies candour. Say then by what madneſs art thou ſeized, that thou breatheſt nothing but

blood and carnage? who has wronged thee? what is thy deſign? To be happy in thy marriage; is it my fault thou art not ſo; or is it in my power to reſtore what thou haſt loſt? If thou haſt not been able to preſerve thy conqueſt, ought I to be the victim of thy imprudence? Is it my exalted rank that wounds thee? or wouldſt thou purchaſe back an ungrateful beauty at the expence of reaſon and of honour? Pleaſure ſo dearly bought, is unworthy of a virtuous man. Thou chargeſt me with having changed my mind; and am I then to be condemned for having quitted a bad reſolution for one more equitable? or rather art not thou more guilty, thou whom an indulgent god has delivered from a fury, yet wouldſt reſume her at any price? the oaths thou pleadeſt were ſworn by her raſh lovers; Love was the deity who dictated it to them and thee; be the performance of it thine and theirs. Yet the day will come, (and I truſt I ſhall ſee it alſo) when thou wilt acknowledge that this oath was weak, and by compulſion ſworn. Hear, then, my laſt reſolves: I will not, Menelaus, be the murderer of my children; purſue, if thou wilt, thy plan of vengeance for a faithleſs wife—it is thy paſſion; but I will not ſacrifice my blood for the Greeks; too many tears would ſuch a ſacrifice coſt me. I have now explained myſelf; if thou wilt not yield to the force of reaſon, I am able to aſſert my right."

The chorus lament his words, ſo ill agreeing with his paſt promiſes—Menelaus declares he is undone, that all his friends forſake him, and that he no longer finds a brother in Agamemnon. He proteſts the firmneſs of his friendſhip, and that he is willing ſtill to ſerve him if it can be done without making himſelf wretched. Menelaus ſays, "Ah, it is too plain, dazzled with the luſtre of that ſceptre which thou ſwayeſt, thou canſt unmoved betray

tray thy brother—It is well, I ſhall find other reſources, and will be obliged to other friends."

A meſſenger enters to them, "Oh king of the Greeks, happy Agamemnon, thy daughter Iphigenia is arrived; the queen and thy young ſon Oreſtes, have accompanied her to Aulis: after ſo long an abſence what tranſport will this meeting give thee! I left the queen and princeſs ſeated on the border of a clear fountain; tired with their journey, they repoſe themſelves there: our horſes feed in the neighbouring meadow—the news of thy daughter's arrival is already ſpread throughout Aulis; the army gather in crouds about the princeſs. The great and happy are always ſure to draw the looks and veneration of mankind. "Happy the prince (they cry) who is to poſſeſs ſo lovely a bride! where will the nuptial feaſt be celebrated? or has Agamemnon only ſent for her to have the pleaſure of beholding her again after ſo long an abſence? Doubtleſs, (ſay others) they deſign to preſent * her to Diana, the tutelary goddeſs of Aulis—What happy hand will lead her to the altar? Why do you delay, princes? prepare the ſacrifice, adorn your heads with flowers: the palace ſhould reſound with rejoicings, the ſprightly dance, and the ſweet breathing inſtruments ſhould celebrate this day, ſo fortunate for Iphigenia."

Agamemnon deſires him to retire, then exclaims, "O miſerable father! of whom ſhalt thou now complain? Alas! thou art thyſelf moſt guilty! Fortune, cruel fortune, more vigilant than thou, hath broken all thy meaſures; thy daughter is doomed, and yet thou dareſt not weep. Oh happy thoſe of humble birth! affliction leaves them at leaſt the ſad reſource of tears, of lamentations which it denies to us, the victims of our grandeur: our people are our tyrants, we their ſceptered ſlaves. I am a king, therefore

* *To prepare her for marriage, as was the cuſtom.*

therefore I muſt not weep, though I am a miſerable father alſo; yet this is little: How ſhall I meet my wife? what ſhall I ſay to her? alas! her fatal journey hither has undone me—will ſhe not think ſhe has a right to be preſent at the marriage of her daughter? Ah, ſhe has but too well anſwered my treacherous views, by bringing to Aulis the innocent victim. Oh! my daughter, not to Achilles art thou deſtin'd, but to the gloomy Pluto; and now methinks I ſee thy wretched mother proſtrate at my feet, "Inhuman father (ſhe ſeems to ſay) is this the marriage which waits thy Iphigenia? oh mayeſt thou, and thoſe which are deareſt to thee, always celebrate the like."—The young Oreſtes too, innocently cries, "Ah Paris, why didſt thou force Helena hence? thou art the cauſe of all our miſeries."

Menelaus begs permiſſion to touch his hand † in ſign of peace---Agamemnon conſents, "Thou haſt conquered, and I am miſerable." Menelaus anſwers, "I ſwear by Pelops, our common anceſtor, that what I am going to ſay to thee comes from a heart free from all artifice and deſign. Oh, Agamemnon, I could not unmoved behold tears flow from thy eyes: I wept like thee, for I am not that ſavage Menelaus, which thou thinkſt me, who would perſuade thee to ſacrifice thy daughter; no, I partake thy tenderneſs and affection. Iphigenia ſhall not fall a victim to my intereſts; 'tis not juſt that I ſhould be gratified at the expence of thy happineſs. And what, indeed, do I expect? to be happy in marriage! no, that is impoſſible! by this ſad ſacrifice I ſhould recover an ungrateful woman, and loſe a brother. Alas! I was blind, my brother, but my eyes are opened—I ſee, I feel the monſtrous cruelty of my requeſt. Oh heaven! a father to ſacrifice his children! my brother's daughter to

† *A Grecian cuſtom to expreſs reconcilement.*

to bleed upon the altar for my quarrel! How has the innocent princeſs wronged Helena? No, Agamemnon, let us disband the army; let it depart from Aulis."

"Ceaſe, oh ceaſe, my brother, to wound me with thy tears—I am, I will be no longer concerned in the barbarous oracle that demands my daughter's life; from this moment, I declare I have no part in it. Reaſon reſumes its ſway—I owe this change to my affection for a brother. It is the property of the wife to abide by that reſolution which is moſt juſt."

A very affecting reconciliation takes place between the two brothers, Menelaus declares that he abhors a tye weakened by mutual diſſentions. Agamemnon ſtill fears that though this change will reſtore his daughter to him, he ſhall ſtill be under the cruel neceſſity of ſhedding her blood. That he is forced to this dreadful expedient by the Greeks. Menelaus adviſes him to ſend her back to Argos. Agamemnon ſays, "that though her arrival is a ſecret to the Greeks, her departure cannot be ſo." He mentions Calchas, a prieſt, fearing that he will reveal the fatal oracle. Menelaus declares he ſhall die, and the ſecret with him. Agamemnon tells him that he has not yet mentioned the chief cauſe of his fear—he ſays, "The king of Ithaca knows all." Menelaus ſays, "He has nothing to fear from Ulyſſes, he cannot hurt him." Agamemnon ſays, "Thou knoweſt his arts, his inſinuating manners, his popular behaviour. Imagine him then haranguing the Greeks, revealing to them the oracle pronounced by Calchas; aſſuring them that I promiſed to ſacrifice my daughter, and that I now refuſe to perform that promiſe. His powerful eloquence will draw the whole army after him. He will turn on us the rage which he excites; my daughter, thou and myſelf, will be their victims. Should I fly to Argos, the

Greeks

the Greeks will, with their united forces, ravage my dominions—Such are the misfortunes in which I am involved. Oh gods, to what have you reduced me! Thou ſeeſt, my dear Menelaus, thou ſeeſt thy counſels are unreaſonable—I have but one favour to intreat of thee; ſo manage the affair with Clytemneſtra, that ſhe may be ignorant of the fatal ſecret, till I have ſacrificed her daughter to the God of Death—this will afford me ſome ſmall conſolation; and be you, oh ſtrangers, inviolably ſecret."

The third act opens with the chorus preparing to receive the queen and princeſs. "What charms have power and greatneſs! behold the princeſs Iphigenia! behold her mother, the queen of Agamemnon! Can their illuſtrious birth, their ſmiling fortune be too much admired? Surely the gods take pleaſure in communicating part of their pleaſures to weak mortals. Ye women of Chalcis, ſtay; let us receive the queen, who is preparing to deſcend from her chariot; let us pay her our reſpects, and aſſiſt her to alight—let us interrupt our ſongs to receive the daughter of Agamemnon; let us not alarm her by any unfortunate preſage, or give fear and inquietude to theſe princeſſes, who, like us, are ſtrangers in Aulis."

Clytemneſtra, Iphigenia, Oreſtes and their train, enter to them—the queen ſpeaks, "The manner in which you receive me is a fortunate preſage, and the pledge of a happy marriage for my daughter—Take out of the chariot the preſents I deſign for her, and bear them to the palace. Alight, my Iphigenia; ſome of you receive her gently in your arms, and lead her; and do thou give me thy hand, and ſtand before theſe fiery courſers, leſt they ſhould terrify this infant. Here, take my little Oreſtes—ſweet babe, thou art aſleep, the motion of the chariot has lulled

lulled thee—awake, dear innocent, and be witneſs of thy ſiſter's happy marriage. Great as thou art by birth, thou wilt be greater by being allied to the ſon of Thetis, a prince equal to the gods. Be near, my daughter, that theſe ſtrangers, in beholding thee, may call me a happy mother—and ſee, thy father comes; let us fly to meet him." Agamemnon enters. Iphigenia aſks permiſſion to embrace her father after ſo long an abſence? They embrace with mutual tranſport. Iphigenia ſays, that ſhe obeyed his command to attend him with the greateſt pleaſure. Agamemnon ſays, "Alas, my child, I know not whether I ought to rejoice at this meeting!" She aſks the meaning of this ſudden coldneſs. He imputes it to thoſe cares inſeparable from the ſtate of General or King. He tells her they muſt part, that they muſt be a long time ſeparated. She laments that he cannot quit the Trojan war, and ſtay with his children in his own kingdom—Aſks him the cauſe of his being detained ſo long at Aulis, and where he muſt go to meet the Phrygians? Agamemnon anſwers, "To a country where would to heaven Paris had never been born." "Art thou then going to croſs the ſeas, my father?" "No, thou ſhalt go with me." She informs him that ſhe would be happy to go if decency * would permit her to embark with him. He tells her that ſhe ſhall paſs the waves †. Agamemnon ſays, "At leaſt ſhe is ignorant of my meaning—O envied ignorance!—Retire, my dear Iphigenia, go and ſhut thyſelf up with thy women. Dearly have I purchaſed the pleaſure of beholding thee, ſince it will be followed by ſo long and painful a ſeparation. Oh youth and beauty worthy of a better fate! Oh Troy, Oh Helen, what miſery have you brought upon me? It is too much—I am ſilent; yet ſpite of me my eyes will flow when I embrace

 thee

* *The Ladies in thoſe days were not permitted to appear in camps, or even to converſe with men.*

† *He means the waves of Styx.*

thee—Farewel, retire, my daughter. Pardon theſe tears my Clytemneſtra; I cannot without grief, ſee my daughter depart with Achilles. To her indeed this ſeparation is advantageous; but ſtill a father will feel ſome emotion when he delivers to a ſtranger's care, the child whom he has bred up with ſo much tenderneſs. Clytemneſtra anſwers, "My mind is not ſubject to ſuch weakneſs: yet when the time comes that I muſt part with Iphigenia, my grief perhaps will be no leſs than thine; but this ſeparation muſt be ſubmitted to; her age and the common law by which her ſex is bound require it. Thou haſt named the husband thou deſigneſt for her; inform me of his birth and country.

The fourth act opens with a ſoliloquy of Achilles: "Where is the General of the Greeks? Is there no one here to inform Agamemnon, that the ſon of Peleus waits him? Aſſembled here upon the ſhore of Euripus, we are unfortunately detained from ſailing. Each of us has his ſeparate intereſts—Some, not yet bound by the ſoft ties of Hymen, have abandoned their country and their fathers: others, have quitted their wives and children; ſo ſtrong is the general paſſion for ſubverting Troy, for which all Greece unites in Aulis; ſure it is the gods who have inſpired it. But I can no longer defer ſpeaking to Agamemnon of what concerns myſelf. I did not leave Pharſalia, * and Peleus my father, to be idly detained at Aulis; unfavourable winds the weak pretence—Scarce can I reſtrain my impatient Theſſalians, who inceſſantly preſs me to depart. "What do we wait for, Achilles?" they cry. "What time "is fixed for our departure? What thou reſolveſt to do, "do quickly, or elſe lead thy troops back to Theſſaly, and "be no longer impoſed upon by the affected delay of the "Atrides

* *A city of Theſſaly at a ſmall diſtance from Lariſſa. It was afterwards made famous by the defeat of Pompey.*

† *The uſual pledge given by the mother of the intended bride.*

"Atrides."—Clytemneſtra enters to him—Achilles carries delicacy ſo far as to be aſtoniſhed to ſee a woman of ſuch exquiſite beauty in his camp, where the army was aſſembled. He with the utmoſt nicety asks her name, and the buſineſs which made her venture her beauty in a place where none but ſoldiers are to be ſeen. When ſhe informs him that ſhe is Clytemneſtra, the daughter of Leda, and wife of Agamemnon, he begs permiſſion to retire; that cuſtom would not permit him to converſe with her there, ſuch was the extreme reſerve and circumſpection of the times. She wiſhes to know for why he would avoid her, and offers him her hand as a pledge of the marriage which ſhe ſuppoſes is about to be celebrated. Achilles ſeems ſtartled at the indecency of the offer, and refuſes it, alledging his too great reſpect for Agamemnon to accept it. Clyſtemneſtra enquires the reaſon of his thus refuſing an offer which cuſtom authoriſes, as he is to marry her daughter. Achilles is ſtill more aſtoniſhed at her ſpeaking of marriage, and aſſures her that it is through ſome miſtake that ſhe is pleaſed to favor him thus. Clytemneſtra ſays ſhe can excuſe his ſurprize, that nature inſpires every one with ſome diſtruſt of friends whom they are not habituated to, and more particularly when marriage is the ſubject of diſcourſe. Achilles replies, "But princeſs once more I repeat I do not comprehend thee: I have not ſolicited the honour of an alliance with the Atrides, nor have they explained themſelves to me, if ever they had ſuch an intention." Clytemneſtra is aſtoniſhed at his words, and cannot divine the cauſe of the myſtery. "What indignity is this? Was I impoſed upon, then, and my conſent ſolicited to a chimerical marriage? Confuſion! I leave thee, prince, it is not poſſible for me to ſupport thy preſence after an affront which fills me with ſhame and confuſion." Achilles tells her he has more reaſon to reſent the affront. "I will go ſeek thy husband in the palace." The old man enters to them: "Stay, illuſtrious branch of Eacus,

great ſon of Thetis, ſtay; I have many things to ſay to thee, and to thee alſo, my Queen." Achilles and Clytemneſtra with the utmoſt eagerneſs enquire the import of his viſit, and why he is ſo ſolicitous to be in private with them; they conjure him to ſpeak, and keep them no longer in ſuſpence. The old man then ſpeaks, "My queen, thou knoweſt how faithfully I am devoted to thee and thy children. Thou doſt remember that Agamemnon received me as a ſlave who belonged to thee. It is juſt then that my fidelity to thy husband ſhould be leſs binding than that I owe to thee." Clytemneſtra owns the juſtneſs of his remark, and therefore begs him to explain the myſtery, which lies concealed under his words. The old man then continued, "Ah Clytemneſtra, thy daughter is to die—and by her father's hand. Alas, unhappy princeſs, the fatal knife hangs over thy innocent head." Clytemneſtra enquires by what black demon he is poſſeſſed. The old man anſwers, that he obeys a counterfeited oracle delivered by Calchas, which imports, that a happy voyage can only be purchaſed with the blood of Iphigenia. She enquires what voyage, and to what place? The old man tells her that it is to Troy, to recover Helen. Clytemneſtra is tranſported with rage that the return of Helen muſt be purchas'd with the blood of Iphigenia; and that the marriage was only a pretence to bring her from Argos. "I am loſt; I can no longer reſtrain my guſhing tears."

The old man informs her that ſhe owes this miſery and deſtruction to the cruelty of Agamemnon. She enquires from whom he had this information. He anſwers, that he was ordered to bring a ſecond letter to her but that Menelaus forced it from him. The old man then retires. Clytemneſtra ſays her daughter was brought thither under pretence of being married to Achilles to be murdered.

Achilles ſays, "I am afflicted for thy part in this affair, Agamemnon has uſed me baſely." Clytemneſtra anſwers,

anſwers, " Alas, Achilles, behold me at thy feet: a mortal as I am, need not bluſh to ſupplicate the ſon of a divinity. Suffer me, ſuffer me to kneel: I am a mother, and I am pleading for a child. Oh, let theſe tender titles move thee. She is thy bride. Alas! ſhe was to have been thy bride: ſo did I vainly flatter myſelf. For thee I brought her hither: for thee I placed the flowery wreath upon her head. Oh wretched Clytemneſtra! I crowned the innocent victim, and led her not to marriage, but to ſlaughter. And can Achilles then refuſe to ſuccour her? Alas, prince, thou art not indeed the huſband of my unhappy daughter, but thou haſt been called ſo. Oh by this hand which I now touch, by the ſoft name of mother—(alas, I dare not conjure by thy own name, which has undone me) do not abandon us: thou art the only aſſylum we have here, our friend, the deity whom I implore. How is it poſſible for a poor weak woman to oppoſe a barbarous monarch, and an obſtinate and ſavage army? Oh let my deſpair be my excuſe for this harſh term. I am not ignorant of its valour. Dare to aſſiſt us, prince, and we ſhall be ſecure: but oh, if thou doſt abandon us, my daughter dies, and I ſhall be for ever wretched!" Achilles replies, " I will do all that thou requireſt princeſs, and more; proſperity has not rendered me inſenſible to the afflictions of others. There are conjectures when moderation is unſeaſonable; there are others, when even its exceſs is ſafe. I have learned frankneſs and ſincerity from the wiſe leſſons of Chiron, my revered preceptor. The Atrides have always found me as ready to obey their juſt commands, as to oppoſe them when they were inconſiſtent with my honour. I love my liberty, and will carry to Troy a heart as free and independent as it is in Aulis. Queen, thou may'ſt ſecurely rely upon my aid, thou ſhalt not ſuffer this cruel outrage from a huſband. Expect from me all that thou oughteſt

to expect from a prince, who though young, is deeply affected with thy misfortunes, and interested to free thee from them. No, Clytemnestra, thy daughter shall not die; the barbarous Agamemnon shall not lay his bloody hands upon a princess who was destined for my wife. The unnatural father shall no longer veil his treachery under the sanction of my name—Oh gods! shall the name of Achilles be fatal to Iphigenia? alas, shall I point the murdering knife at her helpless bosom? Her father is her assassin; but never can I persuade myself that I am innocent of her death, if I suffer her to be sacrificed under the pretence of her marriage to me. Oh! I should be the basest of the Greeks; the infamy of Menelaus would be less than mine: I should be unworthy to be called the son of Thetis if I became the minister of Agamemnons's cruelty. Be comforted, Clytemnestra. Syssile *, from whence the Atridæ drew their origin, shall live eternally in the memory of mankind, and the country where Achilles was born, shall fall into oblivion, ere thy husband shall lay his sacriligious hands upon thy daughter;—I swear by Nerus, the god who lives beneath the ocean; by him, by the illustrious father of the goddess who gave me birth, I swear, that Calchas shall lay aside his preparations for this inhuman sacrifice. What have we to do with these presumptuous diviners, this priestly race? Imposture is their trade; they speak by chance, and oftner speak lies than truth, whose whole science is governed by events. Do not imagine that the soft tie with which thou didst flatter me, is my only motive for engaging thus warmly in the defence of Iphigenia; the injury I have suffered from Agamemnon is alone sufficient to animate me on this occasion. Has he

* *Syssile was a city of Lydia where Tantalus dwelt who was the father of Niobe, from whom Agamemnon and Menelaus were descended.*

he not authorized me to love the princeſs? If I am ſo happy as to obtain her from thy hand, ſhall not Agamemnon dread the reſentment of a lover and a huſband? If it was neceſſary that ſo dear a victim ſhould be delivered to the Greeks; if the intereſt of Greece demanded it, Achilles would be capable of ſacrificing his love to the public good. But though I am now neglected by the Atridæ, I will make them ſenſible that as a friend or foe, Achilles is not to be contemned.

This ſword, which ſhall taſte of blood before I plunge it into Trojan boſoms, this ſword ſhall puniſh the inſolence of thoſe who dare to force thy daughter from me. Be eaſy, princeſs; thou haſt implored the aſſiſtance of Achilles, as of a god: I am not a god, but I would become one to ſerve thee. Clytemneſtra then ſpeaks; "What ſhall I ſay, prince? ſuch generoſity claims all the praiſe that gratitude can pay: but ſtill I fear to diſpleaſe thee; for well I know that heroes like Achilles love not to hear their own praiſe. Alas, ought I not to bluſh that I can only thank thee with my tears; that I can talk to thee on no other ſubject but my grief, which cannot be felt by thee—ah! what does my diſtraction ſay? thou who haſt had the goodneſs to conſole me, to offer me thy aid in this diſtreſs, muſt needs be affected by it. Continue then thy pity to an unhappy mother: alas, I flattered myſelf that I ſhould call Achilles ſon. Vain hope! fate would not grant me ſuch a bleſſing, and this my firſt misfortune. But can there be a more unfortunate preſage for thy marriage than the murder of thy deſtined bride? In this calamity thou, as well as I, art intereſted—yet why ſhould I importune thee thus? thou haſt already declared that my daughter's fate depends on thee—Say prince, ſhall this unhappy daughter fall proſtrate at thy feet to thank thee for this goodneſs? I know, that by the

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ſtrict laws of decency, ſhe ought not to appear before thee—yet if thou doſt wiſh to ſee her, myſelf will lead the bluſhing virgin hither: but if thou wilt diſpenſe with her appearance, grant to the mother's tears what from her innocence and youth might be obtained." Achilles begs that the princeſs may remain in her apartment; as he would not give offence to her delicacy. Clytemneſtra ſpeaks of the juſtice of her teſtifying her gratitude to her deliverer. Achilles ſays, "Permit me to repeat, that I will not wound the modeſty of the princeſs, by deſiring to ſee her: we muſt take care not to deſerve the reproach of impudence, nor afford a ſubject for the cenſures of a numerous army. I have already told thee, that without this uſeleſs ſtep, my ardor to ſerve thee will be no leſs. If Iphigenia can no otherways be preſerved but by fighting for her, my reſolution is already taken; rely ſecurely on me, Clytemneſtra, I will reſtore thy daughter to thee, or periſh in the attempt.

But that we may the better ſucceed in our deſign, permit me, oh queen, to offer thee my advice. Let us firſt endeavour to make Agamemnon reſume the ſentiments of a father. Whatever his arguments are we may oppoſe them with others. Go princeſs, proſtrate thyſelf at his feet, conjure him not to proceed in this inhuman ſacrifice; if he is deaf to thy prayers, return to me; but if thou prevaileſt, thou wilt have no more occaſion for my aſſiſtance; Iphigenia will be delivered, I ſhall no longer be an enemy to Agamemnon, and be leſs blamed by the Greeks, for having had recourſe to gentle methods rather than to arms; thou wilt enjoy the ſatisfaction of preſerving thy daughter, without incurring the reſentment of thy huſband, and without needing my aid." Clytemneſtra promiſes to obey him in every particular, and calls upon the gods to ſhower down their choiceſt bleſſings upon him: they part, and the act cloſes.

The firſt ſcene of the fifth act contains the remonſtrance of Clytemneſtra with her husband. The ſcene opens with the following ſpeech of Clytemneſtra, after a fruitleſs ſearch of Agamemnon, during which he enters. "Alas, in vain have I the palace ſought my barbarous husband; in vain do I ſeek him here; he flies me; he ſhuns my preſence; mean time, my wretched daughter, e'er ſince ſhe knew the doom her father has paſſed on her, abandons herſelf to tears and groans.—Ha! he comes; this cruel, this unnatural father, who would plunge a pogniard into the boſoms of his children." Agamemnon enters to her, and expreſſes his pleaſure at having found her alone, having many things to ſay to her, which her daughter ought not to hear. Clytemneſtra enquires the cauſe of this new myſtery, Agamemnon anſwers "Send Iphigenia alone with me to the altar. All is ready; the luſtral water, the cakes for immolation, the ſacred fire in which they are to be thrown, and the victims, whoſe blood is to be ſhed in honour of Diana, before the nuptials of Iphigenia are performed." Clytemneſtra orders Iphigenia to attend them; "Bring with thee, under thy veil, thy infant brother—See, ſhe is here: hear her, and then hear me." Iphigenia enters in tears. Agamemnon tenderly enquires the cauſe of them. Clytemneſtra reſolutely demands his anſwers to the queſtion ſhe will aſk him. Agamemnon ſays, "Speak, I will anſwer as I ought." Clytemneſtra anſwers "Haſt thou then, inhuman father, haſt thou reſolved to murder thy child and mine?" Agamemnon very much alarmed exclaims, "Oh gods! what horrid words are theſe! what a ſuſpicion, Clytemneſtra, haſt thou entertained." She again urges her queſtion; Agamemnon deſires her to put no ſtrange

queſtions to him, and he will anſwer her. She puts her queſtion again to him, and commands him not to ſeek to evade it. Agamemnon enquires of whom ſhe complains. Clytemneſtra anſwers, "Ah! thou barbarian, and dareſt thou aſk this? thy artifice deſtroys itſelf." Agamemnon exclaims aſide "Oh heaven! I am betrayed." Clytemneſtra why this diſſimulation? I know all the horrid myſtery: thy ſighs, thy tears, even thy ſilence, ſhews thy treacherous deſigns." Agamemnon—"I muſt be ſilent: for oh, it is too much to add impoſture to my other miſeries."—Clytemneſtra in the moſt reſolute manner addreſſes him thus, "Hear me, Agamemnon, for I will ſpeak without diſguiſe; my meaning ſhall not be wrapt up in riddles—Oh, what a husband have I found in thee, thou cruel one! a raviſher, who forced me to his bed after he had murdered* Tantalus, my firſt husband, and from my boſom ſnatched my infant ſon, and gave him death before my eyes. My brothers, Caſtor and Pollux, to revenge me, took up arms, then thou hadſt recourſe to Tyndarus, fell at his feet, and meanly implored his mercy. The good old man ſhielded thee from my vengeance; I was perſuaded to pardon what was paſt, and to receive thee for my husband. How irreproachable my conduct ſince has been, thou wert thyſelf a witneſs. Thou didſt increaſe in wealth and power; abroad revered, happy at home; and to crown all, I brought thee three lovely daughters, and this dear infant: and now how am I rewarded for theſe bleſſings? Thou robb'ſt me of my daughter ſay then, inhuman, if I ſhould aſk thee, why thou wouldſt ſacrifice her, what anſwer wouldſt

* *Homer ſays that this princeſs was firſt married to Agamemnon. Euripides ſuppoſes that ſhe had a former huſband, whoſe name was Tantalus.*

wouldſt thou make? But thou art ſilent. I will anſwer for thee, then. My daughter is to be ſacrificed that Menelaus may recover Helen. Oh heaven, and muſt we ſhed the blood of our children, for an ungrateful woman, who has abandoned her lord! muſt we purchaſe what we hate the moſt with the death of thoſe who are deareſt to us? Ah, cruel Agamemnon, if the Trojan war forces thee to leave me, how ſhall I ſupport my miſerable ſolitude without my daughter? What ſentiments ſhall I entertain of thee, when I in vain aſk for Iphigenia; when wild with grief I ſeek for her among her ſiſters, and hopeleſs ever to behold her more, I wring my wretched hands, and Oh my child, I cry, my deareſt Iphigenia, thou art dead! Thy father murdered thee—Such is his tenderneſs for his family, and ſuch the fatal example he has left them.

For oh, barbarian, what ought to hinder my daughter and myſelf from puniſhing thee by a death as cruel as that thou haſt prepared for us? Alas, what have I ſaid? do not, Agamemnon, ah, do not drive to deſpair a wretched mother! oh, force her not to hate thee! But ſhouldſt thou ſacrifice thy child, what prayers wilt thou offer to the gods with ſuch a victim? what bleſſing wilt thou implore of them, while thou art murdering thy child? a ſafe return to Argos? a return as fatal as thy departure would be ſhameful, ſure! Can I wiſh, can I implore this for thee? what notion ſhould I have of the juſtice of the gods, if I implored their favor for a parricide? But ſuppoſe it is granted, how ſhall we welcome thee when thou doſt return to Argos? Wilt thou embrace thy children? Oh! Agamemnon, this tender conſolation is loſt to thee for ever. Which of them will venture to

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approach a father who coolly maſſacres them?—Thou anſwereſt not. Ah, ſure this ſilence is a proof my reaſons are convincing. Hear me then a moment longer. Are no other titles pleaſing in thy ears, but thoſe of general and of king? Haſt thou forgot thou art a father alſo? If thou haſt not, ſpeak to the Greeks like one. Why doſt thou not ſay to them, "Oh Greeks, you wiſh with ardor to ſail to Troy. Well, I conſent to it; but let the lot decide which of us ſhall ſacrifice his child to purchaſe favourable winds—Is not the intereſt common? common then the danger ought to be. Art thou the only one who muſt give Greece a victim? Is it not more reaſonable, that Menelaus ſhould ſacrifice Hermoine in her mother's cauſe? ſhall my virtue, my tenderneſs and fidelity, be rewarded by my daughter's death, while the guilty Helen more fortunate than I, returns with her's triumphant and adored to Sparta? If my arguments are weak, it is eaſy to anſwer them? but if thou feeleſt their force, oh be again my huſband, reſtore me my Iphigenia, reſtore her to thyſelf." Agamemnon during this energetic oration of Clytemneſtra has remained fixed in a ſullen ſilence: at the concluſion of the ſpeech after a pauſe, Iphigenia breaks ſilence. "Oh my father, if I poſſeſſed the eloquence of Orpheus, were mine the art of giving ſenſibility to rocks and ſtones, if the power of ſoftening hearts were mine, all would I now employ to move a father's pity! Alas, my only eloquence is tears—I weep; it is all I can do. Thus ſuppliant at thy feet, my only plea for mercy is the title of thy daughter. Oh take not from me that life I have received from thee, while life has yet its charms, and force me not, ere fate and nature ſummon me to ſee the gloomy regions of the dead. I

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was the firſt who called thee by the ſoft name of father, and whom thou honouredſt with the tender name of child; 'twas I whom thou firſt receivedſt into thy fond arms, and who was long the only object of a father's tenderneſs. Alas, thou uſedſt then to ſay to me: "Oh, my daughter! ſhall I be ſo happy as to ſee thee flouriſhing and revered in the houſe of a husband worthy of thee and me." Then hanging on thy neck, and kiſſing that auguſt face which I now touch with my hands---and ſhall I, my deareſt father--- I replied, ſhall I enjoy the ſatisfaction of receiving thee in my own palace, and by my filial cares and tenderneſs repay thy age that gratitude I owe thee? Oh, theſe ſoft converſations are ever preſent to mind. Alas, thou haſt forgot them, and all thy thoughts are bent upon deſtroying me. Oh quit, my father, quit this ſhocking purpoſe! Ah ſpare thy Iphigenia! I conjure thee by the names of Pelops, and of Atreus, by my unhappy mother, who gave me to the world with pain, and who now ſuffereth on my account the ſharper agonies of a ſecond child-birth! Alas, what have I to do with Paris and Helen? why will thou ſacrifice me for their crimes? Oh, look on me, my father, hide not thy face from me; deny not thy ſoft embraces to thy child, whom thou haſt doomed to death: if all my tears and my prayers are fruitleſs, give me at leaſt this laſt dear pledge of thy affection.—Aſſiſt me, Oh my brother! alas, what aſſiſtance can thy tender age afford me? yet thou canſt weep, ſweet infant; thy little heart is ſenſible to compaſſion: aid me, then, with thy tears to move a father, and ſave thy ſiſter's life. Behold him; his ſpeechleſs grief pleads for me. Oh give way to tenderneſs and pity. See at thy feet two ſuppliants who call thee father; one yet a child, the other in youth's firſt bloom. Reject us not. Oh, conſider that nothing is to mortals ſo dear as life; nothing ſo terrible as death: madneſs only can render death deſirable; even a wretched life is prized more

than the moſt glorious death." Agamemnon anſwers, "I ſhould be loſt to reaſon, if I did not love my children: even now my bleeding heart is torn with anguiſh; but ruin waits me if I yield. Barbarous as my purpoſe ſeems, it would be cruelty to forego it---Oh, Clytemneſtra, this formidable fleet, theſe powerful kings, againſt whoſe efforts Troy will be impregnable, unacceſſible its ports, till Iphigenia dies: ſo eager their deſire to ſail to Troy, that it reſembles madneſs: they burn with ardor to reach that barbarous land, and to exterminate the raviſhers of our wives. Should I elude the oracle which Calchas has pronounced, this furious army would invade my kingdom, and all my children would become victims to their rage: neither thee nor myſelf would their wild reſentment ſpare. Judge then whether it be in my power to ſave my daughter. Oh, think not, my child, that Menelaus has enſlaved me to his will: it is to Greece I ſacrifice thee: the public liberty muſt be purchaſed with thy blood, and my eternal ſorrow: thou muſt die, my Iphigenia, to teach thoſe proud barbarians, that the Greeks ſuffer not raviſhers to eſcape unpuniſhed." Agamemnon then flies from them, and Clytemneſtra and Iphigenia reciprocally lament their unhappy fate. Iphigenia then bewails to her mother."---"Oh, my mother, Oh, Clytemneſtra! no more ſhall I behold the ſun: this is the laſt of my days. Ye foreſts of Phrygia, ye mountains of Ida, where Paris, ſnatched from the boſom of my mother, was expoſed---you whoſe name he bears, why did you not put a ſhort period to his fatal life? why did he become a ſhepherd? why was he ſuffered to lead his flocks to the borders of a clear fountain, and in a meadow enamelled with flowers, worthy to be gathered by the goddeſſes? Alas! thither they came to my misfortune. The haughty Venus, who boaſts her empire over hearts; the warlike Pallas, and the wife of Jove, contended for the prize of beauty. Oh, Paris, thy deteſted

ed judgment gives glory to the Greeks, and gives me death. Oh, Clytemneſtra! Oh, my mother, death is leſs terrible to me than the thoughts that he to whom I owe my being abandons and betrays me---Oh how miſerable has Helen made me! for her I die, and die by the cruel hand of a father; a father deaf to the voice of nature. Why didſt thou, Aulis, receive into thy ports the Grecian ſhips? ye winds, the authors of my woes, why did you not bear the fleet to Troy? Ah, why detain it on the Euripus?---But Jupiter, the maſter of the winds, diſpoſes as he pleaſes of their breath to mortals: to ſome propitious, to others unfavourable, to theſe he gives a happy voyage, thoſe he detains reluctant in the port---he diſpenſes joy and ſorrow at his will. Ah, how wretched is the condition of mankind! and death, muſt death be added alſo to their miſeries?" Achilles enters to them with a party of ſoldiers. Iphigenia ſuppoſes that ſhe is to be borne to death, trembles at their ſight, and attempts to fly. Clytemneſtra deſires her not to be alarmed, and tells her that 'tis Achilles her deliverer. Achilles informs them that nothing but confuſed cries are heard among the army; that the whole of them demand the victim, and that himſelf has been in danger of falling a victim to their vengeance. He bids them not deſpair, that he can ſerve them ſtill. Pointing to his ſoldiers, he ſays, "Seeſt thou theſe faithful friends armed in thy cauſe? They ſhall be thy defenders. He tells them that Ulyſſes is fixed upon to tear her from her mother, and deliver her up to ſacrifice; but he will be able to force him from her; and pointing to his ſword and his ſoldiers, exclaims, "See what ſhall anſwer for her life." Iphigenia then addreſſes them. "Hear me, my mother, and thou Achilles, hear me. I ſee that thou haſt in vain oppoſed the will of Agamemnon. Let us not attempt impoſſibilities. This generous prince would reſcue me; but ought I to conſent that he ſhould turn the rage of the whole ar-

ny upon himſelf and thee? Hear, then, the reſolution with which heaven inſpires me. Oh! Clytemneſtra, I will die: but this is little; I will die without a murmur or complaint, and conſign my name to immortality by a voluntary and glorious death. Do not, my mother, oppoſe my juſt reſolves. On me the eyes of Greece are fixed On me alone depends the fate of Troy. My death ſhall purchaſe voyage to the Greeks, revenge the rape of Helen, and hinder theſe barbarians for the future from laying their profane hands upon the Grecian matrons. By dying I ſhall preſerve them all. I ſhall be conſidered as the deliverer of Greece. And is not this glorious title worthy of envy? ought I who may acquire it, regret the loſs? You gave me this life leſs for yourſelves than for your country. For Greece, how many of her ſons have taken arms, and dare to combat and to die for her; and ſhall I be ſo baſely covetous of life as to ſtop this noble enterprize? ſhall I permit Achilles to oppoſe an army in my defence, and throw his life away to preſerve mine? The life of one man is more precious than the lives of many women. Is it not Diana who claims me for a victim? and ſhall I, a poor weak mortal, reſiſt a goddeſs? no, I will die for my country: to her I voluntarily devote myſelf. And now ye Greeks, behold me ready: lead me to the altar; ſacrifice your victim, and triumph over Troy. Your trophies ſhall be my glory, and to me for ever hold the place of marriage and poſterity. 'Tis juſt that the Barbarians ſhould be ſubject to the Greeks, and not the Greeks to the Barbarians: the latter were formed for ſlavery, but liberty is the glorious birthright of the former." Achilles begs her not to refuſe his aſſiſtance. She perſiſts in her reſolution. Achilles ſays, "Oh, nobleneſs of mind! which though it ruins all my hopes, I muſt admire. I yield Iphigenia, to thy fortitude and courage, for why ſhould I diſſemble? I cannot diſapprove theſe noble

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ſentiments: but yet perhaps thou mayeſt repent thou haſt carried them ſo far.---I leave thee Iphigenia; but do not imagine that I will abandon thee to thy raſh vow. I am going to the temple of Diana, to wait thee there.

In vain does Achilles repreſent the horrors of the death to which Iphigenia was about to ſubmit—in vain does he offer his aſſiſtance to oppoſe the executors of the fatal decree, and reſcue her from their power.—No, replies the daughter of Agamemnon with an energy that befits the nobleneſs of her mind; "No, prince, it is for Helen, for her fatal beauty, to animate the Greeks to fight and die for her. I ſeek not ſuch falſe glory. Spare me the grief of ſeeing thee ſhed thy blood, or that of the Greeks for me; and ſuffer me to ſave my country by my death." Struck with admiration at the determined ſpirit of the princeſs, Achilles diſcontinues his perſuaſion---though unable to diſapprove her unparalelled fortitude, he anticipates with horror the event which was to ſeperate him eternally from the admired object of his paſſion---one only hope remains, the preparations for the ſacrifice he imagines may probably ſtagger her reſolution---the uplifted knife may cauſe her to relent---with this hope, he takes his leave, determined to place himſelf with his ſoldiers near the altar, and if the courage of Iphigenia ſhould fail, on the inſtant to ruſh amidſt the guard of Agamemnon, and bear the victim from the fatal ſpot.

A very intereſting ſcene enſues on the departure of Achilles, between Clytemneſtra and her daughter, wherein the latter attempts to comfort her mother, and prepare her for the approaching ceremony: above all, ſhe recommends her to reſign herſelf to the will of Jove, and eſteem the fate of her daughter as the greateſt poſſible honour that could be conferred on the race of Atreus. "Thou doſt not loſe me," ſays ſhe, "I ſhall live for ever, and my glory

ſhall

ſhall reflect back on thee---to me it is no tomb*: the altar of the goddeſs ſhall be my monument."---Still more to convince her of the glory ſhe conceived the appointed ſacrifice would bring with it, ſhe forbids Clytemneſtra even to lament her death, and urged it as her laſt and moſt important requeſt that the Greeks ſhould not be witneſſes of her grief for her loſs.---"Cut not off thy hair; let not thy veils and garments ſhew that thou lamenteſt my death ---and for my ſiſters, let not their grief for me ſhew itſelf in their garments"---And then after intreating Clytemneſtra to retire leaſt the exceſs of her grief ſhould profane the awful ceremony that was about to be performed, ſhe orders the attendants of Agamemnon to accompany her to the meadow conſecrated to Diana ---"Begin," ſhe exclaims with an energy nothing leſs than divine; "Begin, ye virgins, the hymn in honour of Diana; be your ſongs a prelude to the ſacrifice, and give the Greeks a happy omen. Let the ſacred ceremony begin: bring the baſkets; kindle the fire to burn the cakes of immolation: let my father lay his hand upon the altar. Greece ſhall by me become victorious; for Greece I fall a happy victim and fatal to the Phrygians. Prepare the ſacred fillets; crown my head; invoke Diana, the queen, the propitious Diana; pour the luſtral water, and the libatian round her temple and her altar. I go in obedience to the oracle to offer up my life."

"Sing," ſhe continues "Oh my virgins! ſing the praiſes of Diana. The goddeſs dwells in Aulis; ſhe preſides over thoſe ſhores where armed Greece is now detained for me. Oh my loved native land! Oh Argos! Oh Mycene! where I was to reign. Oh Mycene! in thy boſom was

* She utters this enigma prophetically; the ſenſe of which is, that ſhe ſhall be carried by Diana to be the prieſteſs of her temple in Tauris.

was I born; like a fair riſing ſtar, thou didſt behold me---Yet will I hold my purpoſe---Yes, I will die for Greece. Oh day! oh ſun! Oh thou bright light of Jupiter! I go to other regions, to live in other worlds, and take an everlaſting leave of thee."---Iphigenia here moves forward to the conſecrated meadow, and the chorus commence: ---"Ah ſee, the victim goes; the lovely victim, who triumphs over Ilion and the Phrygians: behold, ſhe is crowned; behold her ready to receive the fatal blow. ---Ah! ſee the ſacred knife held o'er her head---And now, O gods! ſhe goes to bleed upon the altar!---See, ſhe draws near---go, beauteous victim; a father waits thee with the luſtral water, ſurrounded by the army, who ſigh for nothing but to behold the Trojan ſhores.---And now the fatal moment is come---let us invoke Diana; let us beſeech her to be favourable. Oh, awful goddeſs! if thou muſt have human victims, conduct the Greeks to Troy; to treacherous Troy;---give victory to Agamemnon, and bring him and his army triumphant home, to offer thee, in the name of Greece, a ſplendid crown, as an eternal monument of his glory."

In the mean time, Iphigenia was conducted to the meadow ſacred to Diana: the Greeks aſſembled round her. Agamemnon, when he ſaw her, advanced towards the fatal ground; turned aſide his head; tears ran from his eyes, and he covered his face with his robe. His daughter drew near him, and thus ſpoke: "Behold me ready, O my father, to meet my death; for my country, and for all Greece, I willingly devote myſelf. Lead me to the altar, ſacrifice me, and obey the oracle. Be happy, oh Greeks, if my death can make you ſo; offer up your victim, who ſecures you victory, and return triumphant. But let no one lay his hands upon me; I will preſent my boſom to the ſtroke,"—ſhe ſaid. The whole aſſembly was ſtruck with wonder and admiration, to behold ſuch for-

titude

titude and ſuch virtue in ſuch early youth. Talthibius, who preſided at the ſacrifice, was ſtanding up in the midſt of the kneeling army. "Ye Greeks, cried he, obſerve an awful ſilence, and form happy preſages. Calchas drew his ſword, placed it in a golden vaſe, and crowned the victim. Achilles himſelf took a cup filled with ſacred water, and advancing towards the altar, "Oh goddeſs," ſaid he, "daughter of Jupiter! thou who delighteſt in the chace of ſavage beaſts, thou who ſhineſt the glorious luminary of the night! accept this victim, which Achilles, Agamemnon, and the whole army offer thee; and grant to our ardent prayers, a happy voyage, and the conqueſt of Ilion." Mean time, the Atrides, and all the Greeks remained in ſilent anguiſh, with their eyes bent to the ground. The prieſt took up the ſword, marked with his eye the place where he intended to ſtrike, and invoked the gods. Every ſpectator trembled with horror, and averted their eyes. Calchas ſtruck, when behold, an amazing prodigy! the victim diſappeared, no one perceived how; doubtleſs this miracle was the work of ſome divinity. The high-prieſt gave a cry, which was echoed by the whole army: they ſaw the prodigy, and could ſcarcely believe their eyes. A hind of an extraordinary ſize, and ſurprizing beauty, lay extended on the earth, its heart ſtill beating, and the altar ſtreaming with its blood. "Ye brave commanders of the Grecian army," cried Calchas, tranſported with joy, "behold this new victim. The goddeſs, ſatisfied with our ſubmiſſion, has ſubſtituted this animal in the place of Iphigenia, and would not ſuffer the precious blood of ſo virtuous a princeſs to be ſhed upon her altars. 'Tis done; Diana grants our prayers; ſhe ſmooths our courſe to Troy."

At theſe words the whole army ſeemed to recover new ſpirit; they crouded to the ſhips with eager haſte; they climbed the ſides, and prepared for their departure.

Agamemnon

Agamemnon and Clytemneſtra on this, returns thanks to the goddeſs. The Queen returns with young Oreſtes to the valiant ſon of Atreus, comforted with theſe happy preſages, and prepares to lead the Grecian warriors to the walls of Troy.

Thus concludes this celebrated tragedy of Euripides, which, for affecting incident and ſpirited expreſſion, ranks among the beſt dramas of the æra in which it was written. The leſſon that it teaches ſhould be treaſured up in every breaſt, as the moſt effectual remedy againſt deſpair, under troubles of the direſt order; it teaches them to look beyond the horrors that ſurround them, to the protecting arm of Omnipotence; for the Gods in mercy caſt their eyes upon poor mortals, when they leaſt expect it, and preſerve thoſe virtuous reſignation has merited their favour.

Having given our readers the opportunity of judging of the merits of Eſchylus and Sophocles, by three of the beſt ſpecimens of each, we ſhall proceed, notwithſtanding the extreme length to which, from the extraordinary beauty of the ſubject, and the tranſcendant manner of its execution, we have been under the neceſſity of extending our mention of IPHIGENIA IN AULIS, to analyze the tragedy of Oreſtes, that Euripides may have an equal indulgence with his competitors, by the exhibition of an equal number of his productions.

ORESTES.

This tragedy is beyond doubt one of the nobleſt inſpirations of the Grecian muſe. Euripides has here ſurpaſſed all that Eſchylus or Sophocles ever did before him, with what is called the *action* of a drama: the art of an author, either ancient or modern, has in this inſtance never been ſo conſpicuouſly or ſo effectually manifeſted, and Euripides may claim the honour of anticipating the beſt refinements of ſucceſſive ages, each pretending to improve on the paſt.

His maſterly conduct of the paſſions alſo in this play, is a powerful evidence of the ſuperior knowledge of the ancients in the grand ſources of tragic effect. For this conjunction of action and paſſion, ſo finely managed and ſo forcibly diſplayed, the judges awarded the prize ſtatedly yielded to the bard who excelled in the contentions for poetical ſuperiority at Athens.

The ſcene is laid in Argos, in the veſtibule of Agamemnon's palace. The tragedy commences with Electra, who appears at the foot of a couch, where Oreſtes lies ſleeping; ſhe paſſes through the ſeries of evils that have ſucceſſively befallen the houſe of Pelops, from Tantalus down to Oreſtes. Tantalus, in the infernal regions, is condemned to roll inceſſantly an enormous ſtone from the bottom of a hill to the top. Pelops, cut in pieces, and his limbs ſerved up to the Gods at a feaſt, had his ſhoulder eat by Ceres. Atreus and Thyeſtes made the ſun ſtart back with horror at the dire effects of their quarrel. Marriage was the ruin both of Agamemnon and Menelaus. The former was the victim of his wife, and the other was united to Helen, the curſe of Greece and of himſelf. Oreſtes, the ſon of Agamemnon, killed his mother to revenge his father's death; and "myſelf," continues Electra, "was, together with Pylades, an accomplice of his crime. The ſad condition to which Oreſtes is reduced, is the conſequence of our fatal vengeance. Fixed to this bed of ſorrows, he conſumes away with remorſe and ſhame;---he refuſes nouriſhment, the furies haunt him, and in every ſhort interval of madneſs, he reſigns himſelf to tears and lamentations. Thus has he languiſhed for ſix days, ſince the dreadful deed was executed." The dramatic action, therefore, begins on the ſeventh day after Clytemneſtra's death, and to complete the miſeries of Oreſtes and Electra, it is on this day that they were to be judged by the Argives, who will, doubtleſs, condemn them to death.

A ſcene

A ſcene here follows between Helen and Electra, which, though very naturally wrought, we will paſs over, that we may be as brief as poſſible in our account of this excellent drama. Helen had, with her daughter Hermione, arrived in Argo, under the conduct of Menelaus, who was, however, fearful of expoſing them to the Greeks, leſt they ſhould demand them as juſt victims to their fury.

The chorus, conſiſting of Argive virgins, now arrive to comfort Electra. The princeſs is fearful they will awake Oreſtes, and therefore bids them tread ſoftly. The chorus enquire after the health of Oreſtes, and pity both the brother and ſiſter. Electra enters into converſation with them, and, from time to time, cautions them to be ſilent, ſo tender and ſo anxious is her concern. Oreſtes moves in his bed; the princeſs chides the chorus for having diſturbed him: he ſleeps again, and they continue to converſe and lament the ſad condition to which Oreſtes is reduced. In a word, this ſcene is nature itſelf: ſuch as Euripides loved to repreſent on the theatre, and ſuch as the Athenians required.

Oreſtes then awakes: "Oh ſleep!" cries he, "thou who ſuſpendeſt my torments, and with thy gentle fetters bindeſt up my ſenſes; how ſeaſonably didſt thou come to my relief. Sweet oblivion of our woes, how welcome art thou to the unhappy. Where am I now? and how have I been brought hither? In my phrenzy I have loſt all remembrance of it."—Electra offers to ſmooth his coverings, and to raiſe his head—Oreſtes accepts theſe little offices.---He even intreats his ſiſter to wipe away the foam from his lips, and remove the ſcattered hairs that hang over his eye-lids: he diſcovers all the uneaſy reſtleſſneſs of a ſick perſon, and his ſiſter ſooths him in the moſt endearing manner.

A moment afterwards Oreſtes is ſeized with his uſual phrenzy—"Oh mother!" he exclaims, "no longer arm theſe daughters of hell againſt me—hence with theſe horrid

ſerpents—Ah! there they are; I ſee them grinning round me—Oh, great Apollo! theſe monſters, theſe gorgons, theſe infernal prieſteſſes ſeek my life.—Ah, thou fury, leave me in quiet! wouldſt thou drag me to Tartarus? Bring me my bow and arrows, the precious gifts of Apollo, that I may deliver myſelf from theſe fierce Eumenides, who will not ſuffer me to reſt one moment—Yes; I will pierce them inſtantly. Heardſt thou the ſound of my arrows which cut the air? Doſt thou behold them? Hence, hence, ye gloomy goddeſſes, be gone, fly; accuſe Apollo only."

The poet here actually ſaw the furies with the eyes of his imagination, and has compelled his audience to ſee what he beheld himſelf. Euripides, therefore, has laboured very much in his tragedies, to deſcribe the two paſſions of madneſs and love, and has ſucceeded much better in theſe than (if I am not miſtaken) in any other. Sometimes, indeed, he boldly aims at images of different kinds. For though his genius was not naturally great, yet in many inſtances, he even forced it up to the true ſpirit of tragedy.

Oreſtes at length recovers, in a manner, from his phrenzy, and continues in a very affecting manner.—"Alas! my ſtrength forſakes me! I breathe with pain. Where am I going! How came I out of this bed? The ſtorm at length is paſt. Alas, Electra, thou weepeſt! thou veileſt thy face. Oh my loved ſiſter! why art thou aſſociated in my miſeries? Why muſt the frantic Oreſtes give thee ſo much diſguſt? Ah, take not ſo great ſhare in my calamities; but leave me to conſume away with grief and remorſe. It was I who committed the crime, thou wert only witneſs to it; but what do I ſay? Apollo only was to blame: he, by his ſeducing oracles urged me to this guilt, and now abandons me. Oh! if I had conſulted the ſhade of my father, he would doubtleſs have diſſuaded me from a deed, uſeleſs to him and ſo fatal to me. Hide not thy face, my dear Electra, wipe away thy tears; whatever are

our misfortunes, let our consolations be mutual. These reciprocal services become our friendship. But now retire, languish no longer thus without food; at least allow thyself a little rest, after so many nights of watching and anxiety. Well may thy life be dear to me; for, alas! what would become of me, if I lost thee? Shouldst thou be seized with a sickness, in consequence of thy incessant care of me, I am undone: thou art my support, every one else abandons me."

"Talk not of what I suffer, my dearest brother," replies Electra, "I will live and die with thee: should not I be wretched also if I lost thee? Alone, without relations, without friends, how could I endure life deprived of thee? I will leave thee for a few moments, since thou desirest it; but I beseech thee, remain still on this bed; recal thy reason, banish these fatal ideas, and endeavour to relieve the pains of the mind as we do those of the body: the former are the true diseases of mankind. She retires, after taking an affectionate adieu."

Nature itself could not suggest expressions more tender and delicate. The chorus terminates the acts by stanzas, conformable to the foregoing scene: they implore the furies to spare an unhappy prince, and lament his misfortune with that Pindaric elevation which distinguishes the Greek chorus, in a manner not to be expressed.

In the second act commences a scene between Menelaus and Orestes, in which the latter supplicates his uncle to use all his interest with the Argives at the trial, and in case his condemnation should be the consequence, to employ his force against the city, and rescue him from their fury. Menelaus, however excuses himself on various accounts, but promises that he will endeavour to soften Tyndarus, the father of Clytemnestra, who had done every thing in his power to bring him to punishment.

Orestes, through these studied excuses, penetrates into the

the deſign of his inhuman uncle, who abandons him in ſuch an exigence. He gives him a look full of indignation, and ſuffers him to depart without anſwering him, any otherwiſe than by a bitter ſcoff upon his weakneſs, which would not ſuffer him to fight in any other cauſe but a woman's. The deſpair to which Oreſtes is reduced by his uncle's cruel neglect, is in ſome meaſure mitigated by the appearance of Pylades, his ſworn friend, who arrives unexpectedly.

Pylades having heard of the commotion among the people, and the ſentence of death which was ſoon to be pronounced againſt his friend, had flown with the utmoſt ſpeed to ſave him. He adviſes him to an immediate flight, but this is impracticable: the palace is ſurrounded with guards and ſpies. Pylades is alſo in the ſame unhappy ſituation: he is baniſhed by his father Strophius, for having been an accomplice in the murder of Clytemneſtra.

Oreſtes diſplays all the tender anxiety of friendſhip, he ſeems no longer to fear for himſelf, but only for Pylades, who adviſes him to defend his cauſe himſelf before the aſſembly of the people. Pylades undertakes to attend him, and guard him from all danger—Oreſtes, after much perſuaſion conſents, and the chorus to fill the interval after the act, recounts the misfortunes of the family of the Altridæ, and paints the horror of Oreſtes's crime in murdering his mother. This is purpoſely done with much art in the poet, to keep up the fears of the audience, that Oreſtes will be condemned.

At the beginning of the third act Electra returns, and is alarmed at not finding Oreſtes in the place ſhe had left him. ---In the midſt of her terror, a meſſenger enters and informs her that the trial is concluded, and Oreſtes condemned by the Argives.

Oreſtes and Pylades haſtening to the Aſſembly, entered at the commencement of the trial—the former waſted almoſt

to

to a ſhadow with grief and pain; the latter ſupporting him with the tenderneſs of a brother. The Herald with a loud voice, ſaid, "Do you abſolve or condemn the parricide Oreſtes? ſpeak, determine." Talthibius roſe firſt. He was formerly devoted to Agamemnon, and had now joined the party of the moſt powerful magiſtrates; in a very ſubtle ſpeech, he took care to diſoblige neither ſide: King Diomed ſpoke next; he was for ſparing the criminals lives, and condemning them only to baniſhment. Hereupon, the voices were divided, ſome praiſed and others blamed the propoſition. A citizen now roſe up, bold and ſeditious, but capable of influencing a whole people by his eloquence; he inſiſted that both the brother and ſiſter ought to be ſtoned. Tyndarus ſpoke after him, and pronounced againſt you. At length another perſon appeared, whoſe air was ſimple and modeſt, but ſuch as ſpoke unſhaken courage and uncorruptible integrity: he declared that Oreſtes merited a crown for having revenged his father, and puniſhed an impious mother; whoſe pernicious example, if Oreſtes was puniſhed for her death, would henceforwards prevent men from leaving their families to ſerve their country. His ſpeech was much applauded, and no other orator appeared. At length Oreſtes approached; "Inhabitants of Argos," ſaid he, "it was to revenge the murder of my father, and your king, that I killed Clytemneſtra---my accuſers will reply, but was it for you to revenge it? you ought to have had recourſe to the laws; you ought to have baniſhed your mother, and ſubmitted her ſentence to the judges; but you have revenged one crime by another more impious. Still let us ſuppoſe, ſay they, that a woman kills her huſband, and a ſon kills his mother, is the grandſon to kill his father upon the ſame principle of vengeance? When would the crime of bloodſhed have an end?--In anſwer to all this I ſay, that the father is properly the author of birth, not the mother; therefore I thought myſelf obliged in duty to my father to

revenge

revenge his murder by the death of her who committed it: yet do I acknowledge I have been guilty of a crime; but I would have this crime conſidered as neceſſary, as inevitable, as one which filial piety, as well as Apollo commanded. You would have the Argives ſtone me, and for what? for rendering an important ſervice to all Greece. For ſay, what miſerable times ſhould we ſee, if women ſhould arrive at ſuch a height of wickedneſs, as to murder their huſbands, and yet hope to eſcape unpuniſhed by exciting the compaſſion of their children? thus ſecured from danger, they would make nothing of imbruing their hands in the blood of their huſbands. My ſuppoſed crime has deprived them for ever of this reſource, and yet who is it I have killed? a perfidious wife, who having violated her nuptial faith, inſtead of piercing her own boſom, made her huſband the victim of her adultery. If there are furies who revenge my mother's death upon me, would not others far more dreadful have puniſhed me for neglecting a murdered father. If, however, condemnation is neceſſary, it is Apollo whom you ought to condemn; he only is guilty. Is not a god ſufficient to ſecure me; and who will hereafter eſcape death, if I cannot be ſafe by ſuch a protector?"

The ſpeech of Oreſtes was applauded, but he was unable to move the people in his favour. The ſeditious orator carried it againſt him, and Oreſtes was condemned to die, by the hands of Electra, according to his own requeſt.

Electra bewails her own and her brother's misfortunes, with all the eloquence of exceſſive ſorrow; and thus the third act concludes.

It ought to be obſerved, that Euripides, in the picture he has drawn of the Argive aſſembly, alludes to the Athenian Areopagus, and to the orators of his own time, whom he ſlightly touches in his way.

The fourth act commences with the return of Oreſtes from the aſſembly of the people. Electra weeps; ſhe thinks ſhe now beholds him for the laſt time. The brother tenderly endeavours to calm the grief of his ſiſter, and entreats her not to aggravate the doom of the Argives by her own exceſſive ſorrow. The prince's ſorrow is great, but heroic; that of the princeſs is more tender and more violent, in which the difference of manners is exactly obſerved. Electra begs ſhe may die by the hand of Oreſtes. No, replies Oreſtes, I am already polluted with a mother's blood, there needs not this increaſe of guilt; Oreſtes here unwillingly gives way to grief for a few moments: he ſighs, and Electra aſſuming more courage, now wiſhes for nothing more than to die, if it be poſſible, by the ſame ſtroke that kills him, and to be laid in one tomb with her brother.

Oreſtes after obſerving that his treacherous uncle Menelaus did not ſo much as appear at the aſſembly, calls up all his fortitude, 'Let us die,' ſays he, 'in a manner worthy the children of Agamemnon: we are now to give the Argives a proof of our reſolution: follow my example, ſiſter; and be thou, Pylades, a witneſs to our death; take care of our bodies, and lay them in our father's tomb; farewell.' Pylades here animatedly replies, 'May I be cut off from earth and air, if to ſave my own life I baſely abandon thee. I contributed to thy crime: Nay, I was the author of it; it is juſt that I ſhould die with thee and Electra, whom I conſider as my wife. Alas, what ſhall I ſay in my own defence when I ſhall return to Phocis? I, who was the friend of you both, yet could forſake you when I ſaw you miſerable. No, my honour and fame are too dear to me to ſuffer me to be guilty of ſuch a baſeneſs: but ſince we are determined to die let us firſt take vengeance on Menelaus.

What follows ſeems at firſt view to be inconſiſtent with the manners of virtuous perſons; for Pylades propoſes a ſcheme of revenge which is altogether ſhocking. He adviſes

Oreſtes to murder Helen as the orign of his misfortunes, and Oreſtes reſolves upon it. Even the manner in which thy concert their conſpiracy has ſomething cowardly in it. Yet they are in ſome degree excuſeable, when we conſider that Helen has a numerous train of attendants, and the princes were reſolved that their victim ſhould not eſcape them. As for the diſgrace they ſhould incur by their murder of a woman, Pylades wipes his off in the ſame manner as Æneas in Virgil, when he relates his adventures to Dido.

Namque etzi nullum memorabile nomen,
Fœminea in pœna eſt, nec habet victoria laudem,
Extinxiſſe nefas tamen, and ſumpſiſſe merentes,
Laudabor pœnas.

——For tho' the victor gain
No fame, no triumph for a woman ſlain;
Yet if by juſt revenge the traitreſs bleed,
The world conſenting, will applaud the deed.
To my own vengeance I devote her head,
And the great ſpirits of our heroes dead.

PITT.

Pylades, upon the ſame principle, propoſes this action to Oreſtes as one ſo much the more juſtifiable, in that Helen is alike deteſted by the Trojans and the Greeks.

Trojœ et patriæ communis Erynnis.

The common plague! by Troy and Greece abhorred.

Already in thought ſhe graſps the ſceptre of Oreſtes, and Menelaus will enjoy it; but the intereſt of all Greece is ſtill a more powerful motive than their own private vengeance. It was their duty to deliver their country from a monſter, to revenge her injuries, and to pacify the manes

of

of thoſe who fell at the ſiege of Troy. "The Greeks," continues Pylades "will bleſs us, and change the odious names of parricides and murders into the glorious titles of the revengers of the ſtate."

Such are the arguments uſed by this prince, and to him they appear ſo concluſive that he reſerves to himſelf the honour of giving her the firſt wound, if their victim ſhould by any means eſcape, they reſolved to burn the palace, and die together in its aſhes.

The chorus through hatred to Helen, enter into their conſpiracy. "Ah!" cries Oreſtes, "there is nothing that can be compared with a true and conſtant friend: treaſuries and ſceptres are poor to this valuable poſſeſſion. Thou ſharedſt my former dangers; thou aſſociated thyſelf in my misfortunes; is my life again to be expoſed? again I behold thee at my ſide." He then animates himſelf to purſue a revenge worthy of Agamemnon, and of a ſon who did not degenerate from him.

Electra, after hearing what both the princes had to propoſe, adviſes them to ſacrifice the daughter as well as the mother to their revenge; or rather to keep Hermoine, whom ſhe expected immediately from Clytemneſtra's tomb, as an hoſtage; to the end that Menelaus, when he found Helen murdered, ſhould attempt to revenge her death, they might reſtrain him, by threatening to make his daughter ſuffer the ſame fate; and thus treat with him ſword in hand. Oreſtes, charmed with this propoſal, laments the approaching death of Electra, whoſe fortitude and courage merit a better fate than that to which ſhe is doomed. "My dear Pylades," adds he, "what a wife doſt thou loſe!" All this is beautifully contrived, to introduce the cataſtrophe, as we ſhall ſee by what follows.

The two princes and the princeſs, by mutually encouraging one another, begin to recover their ſpirits, and to perceive a ray of hope. They regulate their ſeveral poſts

as in a conſpiracy: Electra is to await the return of Hermoine at the palace-gate, and give the ſignal for the enterprize to be begun in caſe of any alarm. Oreſtes and Pylades prepare to enter the palace, to execute their deſign when neceſſary; and they conclude this ſcene with a ſolemn and majeſtic invocation of Agamemnon's ſhade, which I ſhall give the reader.

ORESTES. Oh father, who now dwelleſt in the regions of eternal night, know it is thy ſon who calls upon thee! Oh come to our aſſiſtance! It is for thy ſake that I have precipitated myſelf into this exceſs of miſery: it was for having revenged thee that I am betrayed and abandoned by thy brother. I would puniſh him by ſacrificing his perfiduous wife: give ſucceſs to a deſign ſo juſt and lawful.

ELECTRA. Oh father! if in thy tomb thou heareſt the cries of thy unhappy children, who are upon the point of dying in thy cauſe, haſte to their aſſiſtance.

PYLADES. Reject not my prayers, Oh Agamemnon! thou who wert by blood united to my father, ſave thy children.

ORESTES. I killed a mother.

PYLADES. I preſented the poinard.

ELECTRA. I led the victim into the ſnare.

ORESTES. Oh my father, this was done to revenge thee!

ELECTRA. And to perform our duty.

PYLADES. Oh! therefore hear our ſupplications: auguſt ſhade of Agamemnon, and ſave thy blood.

ORESTES. I offer thee a libation of my tears.

ELECTRA. My ſighs and groans I offer.

PYLADES. Enough. It is now time to act; if the prayers of mortals pierce the earth and reach the dead, Agamemnon muſt hear ours. And thou, great Jupiter, the author of my race, the revenger of injuſtice, afford thy aid to her, to him, to me, three friends engaged in the ſame cauſe! let this event be equal to them all, ſafety or death.

The

The two princes immediately enter the palace. As for Electra, ſhe continues at her poſt with the chorus, whom ſhe places at different paſſages to obſerve who goes in or comes out of the palace; and whether any ſuſpected perſon is near. Theſe are minute circumſtances of a conſpiracy, which form a theatrical action wholly in the manner of the Greeks, but full of beauties. Thoſe terrors ſo natural to the ſex, eſpecially on the execution of an important enterprize, which is nothing leſs than a revolution of ſtate, are here diſplayed in the moſt lively manner. Electra ſeperates the ladies of her little court, and poſts them at all the avenues. One of them perceives a man coming; Electra gives over all for loſt; the lady removes all her fears. The princeſs ſends to another place to ſee if all be quiet, and ſhe is told that no perſon is to be ſeen. She then goes to the palace-gate, and exhorts the princes to diſpatch Helen. "They hear me not," reſumes ſhe. Ah how wretched am I! has her charms blunted their poinards?"

Electra again viſits each poſt; ſhe fears leſt ſome of the Argives ſhould haſten to the aſſiſtance of Helen. In ſuch a ſituation every thing is ſuſpected, every thing inſpires terror. "'Tis now," ſays ſhe, "that we muſt caſt our eyes on all ſides."

Helen is now heard to cry out for help. The chorus offer up prayers for Oreſtes: Helen cries out again, and Electra animates the princeſs to ſtrike. The Argive ladies hear a noiſe on one ſide; it is Hermoine returning from the tomb. The ſiſter of Oreſtes orders her friends to appear compoſed, that Hermoine may entertain no ſuſpicion of any danger. The young princeſs declares that ſhe is terrified at the cries and the noiſe ſhe has juſt heard in the palace. "Alas," replies Electra, "theſe cries ſuit with our miſerable ſtate." She then informs her of the ſentence which had been pronounced by the aſſembly of the people againſt her brother and herſelf; and deceiving her by a falſe confidence,

makes her believe that Oreſtes was imploring Helen to intereſt herſelf in their favour, and deliver them from death. Hermoine being the dupe of this artifice, promiſes to employ her good offices in their behalf, and goes into the palace, where ſhe is immediately ſecured by the princes, as had before been agreed upon. Electra then deſires the chorus to make a noiſe, that what paſſes in the palace may not be heard without, and enters herſelf to wait the iſſue of the conſpiracy.

At that inſtant a Phrygian ſlave of Helen's comes out in an agony of fear; and, not knowing where to conceal himſelf from the death that awaits him, utters dreadful cries. When he is a little recovered, the chorus prevail upon him to give them an account of what had happened: he tells them that Oreſtes and Pylades approached Helen in the manner of ſuppliants; and that the Phrygian ſlaves apprehending ſome treachery, or at leaſt ſeeming doubtful what to think, ſuddenly placed themſelves about the queen; that he himſelf was employed in fanning her, (a part of Phrygian luxury often mentioned by the poets) ſhe held the diſtaff in her hand and was employed in ſpinning purple veſts, which ſhe deſtined as an offering to the ſhade of Clytemneſtra: that Oreſtes intreated her to paſs forwards to the ancient altar of Pelops, and hear what he had to ſay to her; and as ſoon as ſhe complied with his requeſt, not ſuſpecting her fate, Pylades under various pretences, reproved that numerous train of Phrygian ſlaves, and locked them up in ſeveral apartments: when they had reached the altar, the two Grecian princes drew their poniards which they had concealed under their robes, ſpeaking thus to Helen: "Thou muſt die, and it is to the treachery of thy huſband that thou who oweſt thy death, in revenge for his having betrayed the ſon of his brother. The queen," continues the ſlave, "cried out; ſhe attempted to fly, but Oreſtes held her faſt by the hair, and bending down her head upon her ſhoulder, was ready to

ſtrike,

ſtrike, when the ſlaves breaking open the doors, came in crowds to her aſſiſtance, arming themſelves with the firſt weapons they could lay hold of; but Pylades advancing fiercely towards them, like the warrior Ajax, or Hector, ſuch as I have ſeen him in Priam's palace, it now appeared plainly how greatly we are inferior to the Greeks in valour." Here he deſcribes in few words the combat which enſued, and in which many of the ſlaves were either ſlain or wounded. Hermoine, adds he, entered and threw herſelf into the arms of her mother. The two princes forced her from thence; and as they returned to Helen to ſacrifice her, this queen, the daughter of Jupiter and Leda, ſuddenly vaniſhed out of ſight. The ſlave concludes his relation with this circumſtance and here ends the fourth act.

Oreſtes, at the beginning of the fifth, comes out with his ſword in his hand; he is apprehenſive that the eunuch will alarm the people by his cries: the trembling wretch conjures him to ſpare his life, which Oreſtes promiſes upon condition that he will ſwear his attempt againſt Helen was juſt. The ſlave agrees to every thing to preſerve himſelf; and Oreſtes ſends him back to the palace. The prince alſo enters the palace again, and the ſecond ſcene is only an artifice of the chorus, who make ſeveral movements on the ſtage, as uſual, apparently to prevent the enterprize from being diſcovered without; but in a few moments a ſmoke is ſeen within the palace, where the conſpirators are preparing materials to ſet it in flames. The chorus perceive Menelaus coming, who has been in part informed of what has happened: he endeavours to force his way into the palace, but Oreſtes ſhews himſelf upon a balcony, and refuſes him entrance. He points his ſword at the breaſt of Hermoine, and already the flames begin to appear. The prince threatens Menelaus to kill his daughter before his eyes, and to burn the palace, if inſtead of making any attempt to enter by force, he does not inſtantly obtain a revocation of the

ſentence

ſentence which the people had pronounced againſt him and his ſiſter. Menelaus divided between rage and fear, neither dares to grant or to refuſe what is demanded of him. Oreſtes inſiſts upon his immediate compliance; but upon Menelaus's delay, who calls out for aſſiſtance, he bids Electra and Pylades ſet fire to the palace.

It now becomes neceſſary for Apollo to deſcend from heaven to unravel the plot: he declares that he had preſerved Helen from the deſigned vengeance of Oreſtes; he ſhews her to Menelaus in glory; he ſtays the arm of Oreſtes, and commands him to eſpouſe Hermoine whom he was upon the point of ſacrificing; and to purify him from the ſtain he had contracted, Apollo impoſes upon him a year's baniſhment according to the cuſtom of the Greeks. He requires that he ſhould afterwards go to Athens, and ſubmit to the judgment of the Areopagus; and laſtly, this god takes upon himſelf the government of the kingdom of Argos, till Oreſtes returns in peace and glory. Electrais given in marriage to Pylades; and the tragedy concludes not only with ſolemn thanks to the gods, but alſo, with a ſincere reconciliation among the princes.

Having thus closed the Orestes of Euripides, we shall proceed to give a brief opinion on his writings, and then compare the three masters of the Grecian scene with each other, pointing out their different merits and explaining the nature of their defects.

" Euripides, " says Aristotle, " although not very exact nor chasted in the subject of his plays, has yet more of the tragic passion than any other poet. " Such is the character of this poet summed up in a few words; there is in the negligence of Euripides a kind of grace which is excluded from the regular performances of Sophocles; without examining too closely, we shall find certain errors in the former, which the latter carefully avoided; but we cannot but pardon them, in consideration of those two tragic passions PITY and TERROR, with which the mind is agitated throughout all his pieces: that he attained to such an height of excellence in what is the true end of tragedy was owing to his having studied nature more than art; and that in his compositions he rather followed the emotions of his heart, than the suggestions of his wit.

Euripides wrote according to the situation in which he found his own mind. Now he was naturally melancholy, philosophic, and an enemy to joy: his disposition less lively than tender, great sensibility of heart, and his character, which is a little fretful and prone to lamentation, appears even in his writings. He had not, indeed, any great subjects for joy; and it is pretended that he found some for uneasiness, in two women whom he married successively. Some also say, that during a journey, he lost a wife whom he tenderly loved, two sons and a daughter; their deaths were occasioned by eating some bad champignons; and that he composed an epigram on this subject to the following effect:

" Oh Sun, who traversest the immense space of the heavens, never didst thou behold calamity like mine! what!

a mother, two ſons, and a daughter torn from me in one day!" In this ſtyle ſo ſimple, ſo pathetic, ſo tender and plaintive, it is eaſy to know Euripides: he always paints himſelf, and thus writing from real emotion, his touches of nature are all exquiſitely beautiful.

Socrates himſelf, the ſage Socrates, who had the ſame theatrical madneſs that poſſeſſed the other Athenians, never failed to attend the new repreſentations of the pieces written by Euripides from pure eſteem of his wiſdom and virtue; which Socrates (as Ælian reports) thought he ſaw fully expreſſed in the plays of this philoſophic poet. Father Thomaſſin has found in theſe works, more matter for his deſign, than in any other practical author of antiquity: and, to cite a more antient authority, Cicero, was above all things, ſmitten with the poetry of Euripedes. He is accuſed of having treated too ill, beſides the Lacedemonians, Menelas their king, women in general, and, above all, Medea. It is even affirmed, that he received five talents from the Corinthians, to throw upon that princeſs the infamy of the murder of her children, although they were the authors of it. By ſome he is juſtified from this accuſation—but it is ſcarcely worth while attending to what ſeems to have been urged by the enemies of this poet to injure him in the eſteem he had worthily obtained.

According to Aulus Gellius, and fifteen other authors, the correctors of his text, Euripides only carried five victories. It was often a multitude, prepoſſeſſed with paſſion, who pronounced the deciſion; ſo that Menander, far from aſhamed at having been conquered by one Philemon, ſlighted the decree, and aſked Philemon, cooly, if he was not aſhamed to have been his conqueror—His intimacy with Archelaus, king of Macedon, has been before mentioned. The honour is almoſt equal to a poet of ſo much merit as Euripides, and to a king, who ſtrove to draw to his court, all perſons and things that were diſtinguiſhed in Athens, by the beſt performances in wit and arts.

Euripides

Euripides bore the character of being very diſintereſted; although, his enemies accuſed him of having quitted Athens from the temptation of the favour and preſents of Archelaus. This prince indeed, loaded him with them. A courtier who was deſirous of having a golden veſſel, aſked him for it in pretty evident terms; "Let it be carried," ſays Archelaus to Euripides: "you deſerve to aſk, and he deſerves to have it, without aſking."

It is certain that notwithſtanding the comedy of Ariſtophanes, entitled the frogs, where that ancient comic-writer cotemporary with the tragic authors, treats the three poets very cavalierly; both then, and ſince, the moſt diſtinguiſhed honours were paid not only to their works, but to their memory, ſtatutes were erected to them by a public Edict; and all their works moſt of which had been written by their own hand, were preſerved in the public archives. They were probably the books, which according to Galien, a king of Egypt, in order to adorn his Alexandrian library, was deſirous of having, above all, the manuſcripts of Euripides, which contained ſeventy five tragedies. He aſked them of the Athenians who refuſed him. In his turn he refuſed the Athenians corn in a great dearth 'till having received the manuſcripts which he deſired, he forgot the refuſal and the bad manner in which he received the preſent and ſhewed nobly his acknowledgment, by permitting the Athenian merchants to carry away as much corn as they pleaſed, without paying the ordinary tribute. It would be uſeleſs to recite all the eulogiums poured upon the three poets, by the Greeks and Romans.

CHAP IV.

ÆSCHYLUS—SOPHOCLES and EURIPIDES compared.

Such were the maſters of the Athenian ſcene: but the character of their writings intereſting us much more than their

their perſons, this is the place to delineate that character ſo well, that the full view of it ſhall not be loſt a ſingle moment in the parallel which we here undertake very briefly to draw. Let us obſerve then, that the cotemporary perſons, and citizens of the ſame country, have in their character ſomething general, that extends to all, and ſomething perſonal that diſtinguiſhes them among themſelves. We know an Italian, an Engliſhman, a Spaniard, a Frenchman, at firſt ſight, all walk, all think, all act; but they do not walk, think, nor act alike. The difference ſtrikes our eyes, a more refined and leſs ſtriking difference is that which is found in every man of the ſame nation: for the univerſal character ſubdivides itſelf infinitely; and the more this ſubdiviſion is extended, the more difficulty have we to decypher it. Æſchylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, have an Athenian air, without reſembling each other—there is a general character in all, but through this general character, may be often perceived in our three Greecian poets, certain differences, that form to each a particular character.

Cicero, in his third book of Oratory, ſays, "Sculpture is but one and the ſame art: but Myron, Polycletes, and Lycippus, who have excelled in it, have been very different in their manner; yet ſo like themſelves, that it was impoſſible not to know them. It is the ſame thing in painting, Zeuxis, Apelles, Aglaophon cannot be ſaid to reſemble each other; yet they are all moſt perfect in their kind. Now if this is as wonderful as true in the ſilent arts, if I may talk in that ſtile, how much more is it ſo in diſcourſe, which, although it is compoſed exactly of the ſame words and the ſame ſentences, ſtill admits theſe differences! differences that will not allow, that one thing is good, and the other bad; but that in different kinds, all things are good and commendable, the poets are a moſt evident proof of this fact; for we ſee a wide difference between Æſchylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and yet almoſt the ſame praiſes attended them each in his kind."

This

This paſſage is the explanation of all the difficulties concerning taſte, and ſhews plainly that taſte is not arbitrary. All the manners of painting are good: yes, when they equally participate of a good taſte. It is the ſame in ſtile. So that where it is ſaid, that you muſt imitate in eloquence the ſtile of Cicero, or of Demoſthenes, it is not meant that you muſt groſsly copy their manner, but you muſt take that periodical taſte which was nouriſhed and prevalent in thoſe excellent ages in which they lived; nor will it be an hindrance to your having a manner of your own.

It is a reproach often caſt upon the poets that they do not follow truth in the characters which they form: but they ſhew plainly that they form thoſe characters either as they ought to be, or as they are. And to this purpoſe Sophocles and Euripides anſwered their cenſors; Sophocles by ſaying that he made his heroes as they ought to be; and Euripides that he made them as they are.

To reduce the compariſon into as ſmall a compaſs as poſſible, and at the ſame time give a conciſe and conſpicuous view of the three poets, as to the mode in which they reſemble each other, and their reſpective general characters, we ſhall cloſe this chapter with the following allegorical expoſition.

Æschylus, being the inventor and father of tragedy, is a torrent that rolls over rocks, foreſts and precipices. Sophocles is a canal, which waters delicious gardens: and Euripides is a river which does not always form its courſe in a ſtraight line, but takes delight in ſerpentizing itſelf through fields enamell'd with flowers. All the three have done for tragedy what the fable ſays the gods did in favour of Pandora. Æſchylus, who firſt opened the bloſſoms of tragedy, gave her an air a little rude, marked her with ſtrokes too ſtrong, made her advance too haſtily, and aſſigned to her a gigantic appearance rather than the appearance of an heroine. Sophocles reduced her (according

to the expreſſion of Horace) to the decent appearance of a matron. Euripides again in giving her new graces, made her ſometimes a little philoſophical.

CHAP V.

THEATRE AT ATHENS—THE MASKS, &c.

We have in a former part of this hiſtory, mentioned that Æſchylus was the firſt who built a theatre of any regularity after the travelling theatre of Theſpis, which was no other than a cart; the theatre of Athens was then compoſed of wooden benches as well as the amphitheatres that roſe by degrees: but one day, when Pratinas gave to the public one of his pieces, the Amphitheatre overcharged, broke and ſunk down all on a ſudden. This accident engaged the Athenians, who were already much prepoſſeſſed in favour of plays to elevate thoſe noble theatres, imitated afterwards with ſo much ſplendour by the Roman magnificence. Their encloſure was circular on one ſide, and ſquare on the other: the half circle contained the ſpectators, ranged by ſtories one above another, and the long ſquare was adapted to the actors and the ſhew. There were machines of all ſorts for the deities of water, heaven and hell. Palaces, temples, ſquares, and cities, were ſeen in perſpective at the end. The change of decorations, the flyings, the heavens in glory, and all the parade that is employed in the modern theatres of Europe, were employed there but with much more coſt and grandeur: it is ſufficient to judge of the expence if we recollect that the charges of the theatre, and the pieces acted in it, were defrayed by the Athenian ſtate, and that more was expended in thoſe ſort of diverſions, than the amount of many of the Grecian wars!

Under

Under the concentric demi-circles, where the ſpectators ſat, little porches were contrived, to retire into in caſe of bad weather, for the antient theatres were almoſt entirely uncovered. To guard themſelves againſt the heat of the ſun, they ſpread large curtains, tied by cordages to the extremities of the theatre; and that nothing might be wanting for the convenience and the pleaſure of the ſpectators, delicacy and luxury were carried ſo far, that a conſtant dew of perfumed waters was falling from the top, by means of innumerable little ſtatues, which adorned the coping of the edifice. The theatre was capable of holding upwards of twenty thouſand ſpectators.

The MASKS were not uſed theatrically 'till the time of Æſchylus. They are ſaid to have been firſt made of the bark of trees *, of leather, covered with ſtuff or linen, but thoſe being found eaſily to wear out, they made others of wood, which the ſculptor faſhioned to the poet's fancy. They were alſo ſometimes compoſed of a leaf called arcion; which Pliny tells us was the broadeſt leaf that could be found. —The ancient Maſks ſerved only ſimply to cover the face, but thoſe of the theatre were a kind of helmets which covered the whole head, and repreſented not only the ſeveral features, but alſo the hair, beard, and ears, according to the ſeveral characters, and even extended to the ornaments which women uſed in their head dreſſes. The different age, ſex, character and paſſions, were ſo ſtrongly depicted on them, that the ſpectators apprehended at firſt ſight for whom they were intended, and required no other explanation: ſo ſtrongly were the ancients of opinion that a particular caſt of continuance was eſſential to every character and paſſion, that whenever a play was delivered to the actors,

* Oraque corticibus ſumunt horrenda cavatis. VIRGIL.
Quidam Arcion perſonatam vocant cujus folio nullum eſt latius PLINY.

the authors alſo gave a draught of the maſks proper for it. One, a complete draught of theſe, is yet to be ſeen in an antient copy of Terence, in the Vatican; and there are alſo ſketches of them in M. Dacier's Terence.

There were tragic, comic and ſatyric MASKS, all which had exaggerated features, a wide gaping mouth, and ſeemed, according to Lucian, ready to devour the ſpectators. A fourth ſort has alſo been found, the features of which were very regular, and the deformity of others did not enter into their compoſition; theſe probably belonged to the dancers.

We have reaſon to apprehend there were three other kinds in uſe with the antients, though they have neglected to mention them, viz. 1. Thoſe which repreſented men naturally as they are. 2. Thoſe which were for ſhades and ghoſts, and had ſomething frightful in their appearances. 3. Such as characteriſed furies, gorgons, &c. theſe were the moſt terrible of all. Pauſanius tells us Æſchylus was the firſt who introduced the hideous and frightful maſk, and that Euripides made uſe of ſome with ſerpents on their heads. Laſtly, the ſatyric maſks, which were the moſt ridiculous and extravagant of all, and founded only on the imagination of the poets; for beſides the fawns and ſatyrs (from whence they had their name) they had thoſe alſo of Cyclops, Centaurs, and all the monſtrous animals which fable has created, and here it was they were moſt neceſſary.

Theſe maſks, it muſt be allowed, were of the greateſt advantage to the antient actors, as thereby they could play a variety of characters without any inconvenience from age or ſex, and ſaved the ſpectators the tireſomeneſs of ſeeing always the ſame faces: they could alſo, by this method multiply their actors at pleaſure, as every piece had its peculiar caſt of countenance, and beſides could make the appearance of thoſe pieces more perfect whoſe intrigue depended on a reſemblance of perſons, ſuch as Amphyrion, and the Menechmæ; whereas with us, thoſe characters

racters can never acquire a ſufficient probability, and imagination muſt be called in to ſupply the defect.

It muſt be confeſſed that theſe maſks, joined to the other ornaments, could not but take away, in ſome meaſure, the grace of the action: but, on the other hand, the ſpectators were at ſuch a diſtance that they could not perceive the delicate features — the maſks were therefore, no doubt coloured much ſtronger than the life, that they might have effect to the very extent of the theatre, which was ſo exceedingly large, that this ſacrifice became abſolutely neceſſary. A man who repreſented a god or a hero, made the appearance of a giant: he had a head, legs, and arms that were added, and all the reſt was anſwerable to this enormous grandeur, to equal the ſtature of heroes: above all, Hercules is ſaid to have been eight feet high. For ſuch was the prejudice of the populace that they imagined the great men of the heroic times were of a moſt extraordinary ſize; and Juvenal deſcribes children frightened at the ſight of theſe perſonages, and hiding themſelves in the breaſt of their mothers. The maſk had ſomething very ſingular: The immenſe aperture of the mouth was ſo contracted, that it increaſed the ſound of the voice: it was, in effect, a true voice-bearer. It was neceſſary in another reſpect, to empower the voice to fill the ſpace of the place. Brazen veſſels were fitted for that purpoſe in the intervals of the Amphitheatre: theſe veſſels * being adjuſted to the different tones of the human voice, and of the muſical inſtruments, rendered by their conſonance, the ſounds more agreeable, more ſtrong, and more diſtinct. The voice was the principal object of the care of the actors: they omitted nothing to make it ſonorous — In the fire of action, they followed the tone given to them by the inſtruments, and purpoſely lowered and heightened their voices. to notify exactly where the paſſions demanded loudneſs. This, perhaps, has been the reaſon

* Anſwering in effect, to our ſounding boards.

reaſon why ſome people have thought that the Grecian tragedies were entirely ſung; or at leaſt, that they were a declamation modulated, and noted in exact form: no ſuch thing apppears. The whole aſſemblage, we may ſee, was too machinal, and the effect was different from action, without diſguiſe. With reſpect to the artificial aids given to the voice, it muſt be obſerved, that as ſome of the ſpectators were upwards of one hundred yards diſtant from the ſtage, the natural voice would have died away, and been loſt before it reached the ear. For this reaſon too, the maſks were ſo neceſſary, ſince, the ſpectators could not diſcern the variable play of the ſofter paſſions in the countenance.

The Maſk, Sock and Buſkin conſtituted the moſt material differences between the ancient and modern players. The Sock and Buſkin were the ancient appendages of tragedy and comedy; the former is deſcribed by ſome to be a kind of a high ſhoe reaching above the ancle; others ſay it was only a low common ſhoe, the uſe of which on the theatre was confined to comedy. The buſkin was a purple coloured boot of a quadrangular form, which reached above the mid-leg tied under the knee, and richly ornamented with jewels. The thickneſs of the ſole gave a conſiderable elevation to the ordinary ſtature; it was the peculiar diſtinction of tragedy. It is ſaid to have been worn promiſcuouſly by either ſex, and that the Roman ladies uſed it to raiſe their height; however, the Sock and Buſkin have ever ſince been the characteriſtics of comedy and tragedy.

CHAP VI.

Comic Poets of Greece—Menander, Aristophanes, &c.

The firſt comic poets we read of among the Greeks, were Chronides, Magnes, and Phormas, who began to improve

prove comedy in Æſchylus's time; and after his death, Cratinus, Plato, Epicharmes, Crates, Eupolis and Ariſtophanes. The unlimited raillery of comedy was highly agreeable to the people of Athens. While that ſtate continued free, and very juſtifiable while it kept within the bounds of decency, mentioned by Horace; for the greateſt men not being ſpared in their theatric entertainments, they were thereby kept from infringing on the liberties of the people.

The poets were reckoned the moſt uſeful members of the commonwealth, and performed the offices of ſtateſmen and philoſophers, in reforming the government and inſtructing the people.

Eupolis, Cratinus, and Ariſtophanes were particularly excellent. We have no remains of any of their works but of the laſt; and of the many dramatic pieces he wrote, only eleven are tranſmitted down to us. He excelled in a ſpirit of ſatire or lampoon, and the attic ſalt of the Greeks abounded more in him than in any other writer, but the ruſticity of the age in which he lived is viſible in the plainneſs of his characters. He drew them ſuch as they were from life, but was not always happy in the choice; he had great faults and great beauties. His ſtile being warm, lively and natural, and his characters juſt, he could not fail of pleaſing a common taſte; but the keenneſs of his wit did not entirely atone for his perſonal abuſe and low buffoonery. What amends could he make ſociety for not only publicly abuſing Socrates, but even going ſo far as to name him upon the ſtage, when he himſelf was preſent.

But as even the moſt innocent deſigns may be perverted to the worſt purpoſes, the poignancy of their ſatire, no longer pointed at the wicked, but was levelled at religion, virtue, and the moſt reſpectable characters, either by naming them publicly, or having maſks painted to ſuch a likeneſs that none could miſtake them. This at length obliged the ſtate to interpoſe, and to enact laws againſt all perſonal invective for

the

the future. From a conſideration of the nature of the exhibitions at this time permitted on the Greek theatre, we are led to ſuppoſe that Ariſtophanes was then the Foote of Greece; and in many things the Engliſh is not inferior to the Grecian mimic.

The poets being reſtrained from perſonal abuſe ſoon found means to elude the law, and affixed feigned names to their characters, but ſtill drew them ſo like, that the ſpectators could not be eaſily miſtaken: by this means they enjoyed a double advantage, that of beſtowing their cenſure where they pleaſed, or where it was merited, with impunity, and at the ſame time of enjoying the delicate ſatisfaction of their audiences finding out and comparing the portraits which they drew with their originals; this continued cuſtomary 'till the time of Alexander the Great, who obſerving that the licentious freedom of the poets encreaſed daily, totally ſuppreſſed it. From hence the new comedy aroſe, which no longer glanced at, or deſcribed particular perſons. The names and events were fictitious; and as the characters and manners were taken at large from real life, no particular offence could be taken. Menander was the inventor or improver of this kind of comedy, which was the fineſt and moſt uſeful of any; he introduced into his dramatic pieces an agreeable and refined vein of ſpirit and humour confined within the ſtricter bounds of decency, to which his predeceſſor Ariſtophanes was almoſt a ſtranger. There are little or no remains of this excellent poet handed down to us, though he is ſaid to have wrote and prepared upwards of a hundred comedies for the ſtage. We may form an idea of his merit from the character Quintilian has left of him, "that the brightneſs of his merit had entirely eclipſed the reputation of all the preceding writers in that way." Terence has derived the greateſt part of his fame from him by tranſlating a few ſelect comedies of his; and though the latin bard is in general allowed to be very excellent

excellent, yet he is thought by the beſt judges to have fallen very ſhort of his great original.

CHAP VII.

THE ROMAM THEATRE—ACTORS AND AUTHORS.

We ſhall now proceed to ſtate with as much brevity as poſſible the origin of the Latin ſtage. When the Romans began to enjoy the bleſſings of peace, they gradually refined themſelves from that ſavage ruſticity which their ſimple manner of living, and reſtleſs military genius had enured them to. The Greeks were their models both for learning and politeneſs; and from them they deſcribed their firſt theatrical hints.

Græcia capta ferem victorem cepit et artes
Intulit agreſti Latio.

HOR.

About one hundred and thirty years after the Grecian theatre had reached its full ſplendor, dramatic entertainments began to be encouraged in Rome; like the Grecian it took its riſe from the rural jocularity of the common people. At firſt they entertained themſelves in their feſtivals with irregular verſes, the product of jollity and wine, full of groſs raillery, attended with dances and low buffoonery: theſe were called Feſcennine verſes, from Feſcennia, a city of Etruria, from whence they were brought to Rome.

Feſcennina per hunc inventa licentia morem
Verſibus alternis opprobria ruſtica fudit.

HOR.

Theſe afterwards were exchanged for more innocent entertainments called *Satycæ*. They only conſiſted of in-

offenſive raillery, from whence all obſcenity was baniſhed; and they were the favourite diverſions of the people 'till Livius Andronicus and ſome others preſented the people with ſeveral innocent characters in both kinds, which they had tranſlated from the Greek; but none of their works have reached us. The only poet of any note among them was Plautus. Nineteen of his theatrical pieces have been handed down to us. He was the ſame among the Romans as Ariſtophanes was among the Greeks; but is reputed to have come neareſt of all the dramatiſts to the true attic wit, which included every thing perfect. In ſome of his writings he has excellent maxims for the conduct of human life, but in others he often degenerates into abſurdity and obſcenity; which indeed was the prevailing fault of the pagan world: yet his ſcenes are full of humour, and his characters greatly diverſified. The *Attellanæ fabulæ* ſucceeded the *ſatyræ* which were ſelect pieces of wit and merriment, intended to relieve the heavineſs of tragedy; and became ever afterwards inſeparably connected with it; I ſhould apprehend not much unlike our Tragi-comedy. Theſe, a celebrated french female critic remarks, were in ſo much eſteem "that the perſons who acted in them were not ranked with the Comedians, nor obliged to unmaſk on the ſtage when they played ill, as others were, and, as a peculiar honour, they were allowed to inliſt in the army;* therefore low and trivial verſes were beneath the dignity of the Attellanæ."

Among the Romans, the dramatic dreſſes were diſtinguiſhed into ſeveral kinds, viz. *Togatæ*, *Palliatæ*, *Prætextæ*, *Trabeates*, and *Tabernariæ*, and varied upon the ſtage as the characters required.

The Toga being the common habit of the Romans, was uſed by their actors, when any ſtory drawn from the manners

* An honour which the actors of our day are very willing to forego.

manners of common life, wherewith it was to be ſuppoſed the actors and audience were perfectly well acquainted was repreſented.

The *Palliatæ* were uſed when thoſe tragedies or comodies were acted which were of Greek original; the pallium or cloak being the ordinary dreſs of that nation. Here it may not be improperly remarked, how very careful they were in adjuſting the propriety of their dreſs to their character, as well as their voice and action.

The *Prætextæ* were of a more exalted and ſerious caſt; poſſibly, the difference between them and the Togatæ was much the ſame as that which we ſuppoſe to be between high or genteel comedy, and the middling or low. Their names imply as much. The Prætexta were, the habits bordered with purple, worn by the magiſtrates and Roman gentry; and the Toga was the uſual dreſs of the common people.

The Romans were pleaſed alſo to diſtinguiſh the inferior characters of their drama, by another name, viz. Trabeates. The dreſs of this name was appropriated to ſoldiers and ſailors, and others of that caſt. To which we may add, thoſe called Tabernariæ, which were ſketches of the manners of the meaneſt people, ſuch as conſtitute the dramatis perſonæ of our farces.

The actors of mimes performed barefooted; they were pieces of the moſt low and farcical kind, and moſtly exhibited in dumb ſhow, from whence our preſent pantomimes are derived; but they were much more ingenious in their art, and could repreſent the thoughts and paſſions with ſuch admirable dexterity, that a foreign prince having ſeen one of them perform in Rome, requeſted as a favour of Nero, that he might be allowed to carry with him to his own country that Mime who could by his expreſſive action alone, convey his ſentiments to people of the moſt different languages.

The Roman theatre was in its meridian of perfection in the time of Terence. Of all the Roman dramatic

writers he came the neareſt to the elegant ſimplicity and attic purity of the Grecian drama; he made Menander ſpeak the langnage of Rome with the utmoſt grace and delicacy, ſuited his characters to nature and truth, and drew the manners of the Romans with the moſt happy propriety. Plautus has more life and variety; his beauties appear ſuddenly and ſurpriſingly: in Terence they preſerve a conſtant glow and uniformity, and leave us nothing more to deſire.

There were ſeveral other poets who attempted tragedy and comedy at Rome; but as none of their pieces have ſurvived, we can form no idea of their merits in either way.

Theſe theatric pieces both of Greece and Rome, were interſperſed with choruſſes, which explained the ſubject to the ſpectators, and made moral remarks on it.

The muſic played during the whole performance. The muſician had two flutes of different ſize, the one a baſe and the other a treble. The baſe had but a ſmall number of holes, the treble a great variety, and gave a ſhrill ſharp ſound: the flutes were ſometimes unequal, but had a certain agreement between them, like our thirds, fifths, or octavos. The muſic was ſometimes guided by the ſubject of the play; ſo that the people could tell before-hand from hearing theſe inſtruments. what the performance was to be; at other times it was adapted to the occaſion. If the play was performed at a funeral ſolemnity, the muſic was grave and ſlow; if on a joyful occaſion, it was briſk and airy, and for religious incidents it was made to partake of the nature of both.

CHAP

CHAP VIII.

THE ANCIENT ACTORS, ROSCIUS, ÆSOPUS, &c.

IT is certain that Theſpis and Eſchylus, the firſt founders of the ancient Drama, were performers of their own pieces: the one having added a ſecond or third actor or geſticulator, to enliven the old heroic ballads of his time, and the other given them the muſic, ſock and buſkin.

How paſſionately fond the ancients were of dramatic entertainments, may be inferred from the ſumptuous theatres they erected, and the immenſe ſalaries they paid to thoſe actors who exceeded in their profeſſion.

At Athens the actors were always perſons of good birth and education: Poets, Orators and even Kings, did not diſdain to appear on the ſtage, as Cornelius Nepos informs us; this being thought in thoſe times of ſimplicity, neither injurious to reputation, nor deſcending from dignity. And though players were not in ſo much eſtimation at Rome, as their ſtage had not attained the perfection of the Grecian, and becauſe of the warlike genius of that people; yet if they were artiſts in their buſineſs, and men of probity in their private lives, they were reſpected and eſteemed by the chief perſons of the commonwealth.

It is certain that they neglected no method, and ſpared no expence which could contribute to the perfection of their theatrical entertainments; and the high ſenſe they had of merit in this way, may be learned from the great encomiums they have handed down to us of two of their moſt eminent performers, Roſcius and Æſopus; encomiums which we are certain were only paid to real merit

merit by people of the moſt refined ears and delicate ſenſibility, who only were the beſt judges of it.

Roſcius was born at Lanuvium, and brought up at Selonium, a village about ſixteen miles diſtant from Rome on the appian way: he gave ſuch early proofs of the pregnancy of his genius, that the greateſt lords of Rome undertook the care of his education, and gave his talents a cultivation agreeable to their natural bent. He is deſcribed as moſt agreeable in his perſon, and the model to all the youth in Rome of every thing that was truly graceful. Cicero ſays that he was formed both to move and to pleaſe; and that "he was ſo excellent an artiſt, that he ſeemed the only perſon who deſerved to tread the ſtage; yet ſo excellent a man in all other reſpects, that he ſeemed the only man of all others, who ſhould not have taken up that profeſſion *."

The ſame author informs us, "that his excellencies became at length proverbial; and the greateſt praiſe that could be given to men of genius in any particular profeſſion, was, that each was a Roſcius in his art †."

Notwithſtanding the agreeableneſs of his perſon, he is ſaid to have had a ſquint in his eye; which defect his maſk in a great meaſure concealed, yet left enough to diſcover the fire there which paſſion had lighted up. This is what I ſhould imagine Cicero alludes to in his ſecond book De Orat. Sæpe ipſum vide, cum ex perſona mihi ardere oculi hominis hiſtrionis viderentur. Though doubtleſs there were ſome parts in which this natural deſect was not much obſerved, ſuch as Paraſites, and the like; and

* Cum artifex ejuſmodi ſit, ut ſolus dignus videatur eſſe quam in ſcena ſpectatur: tum vir ejuſmedi eſt ut ſolus dignus videatur qui in ea non accedat. CICERO.

† Iamdiu Conſecutus eſt, ut in quo quiſquis artifex excelleret, is in ſuo genere Roſius diceretur.

CICERO de Orat. Lib. I.

and poſſibly this might have been one reaſon why he confined himſelf chiefly to comedy.

Roſcius was Cicero's friend and inſtructor in the art of oratory, and that great model of oratory, in giving rules to his pupil to prepare for great movements, after ſaying, that an orator ought to give his hearers time to breathe, and let their admiration reſt, and to imitate the painters who throw into ſhade and diſtance, ſome part of their pictures, that the reſt may ſeem to riſe with greater effect, introduces Roſcius as an example of this, ſounding ſome verſes with mildneſs and negligence, in order to raiſe the following ones to their true pitch of paſſion: ſo that it is likely he underſtood the contraſt of *chiaro oſcura* perfectly well.

It is obſerved by a writer on this ſubject, that "with the ancients the ſock and buſkin never interfered; Sophocles and Euripides never wrote comedies, nor Ariſtophanes and Menander tragedies."—In like manner "Roſcius finding his ſtrength and genius to lie in comedy, attached himſelf wholly to it, as Æſopus, for the ſame reaſon only aſſumed tragic characters*." This, by the way, is a uſeful hint, both to our poets and players, to chuſe ſubjects only for writing and acting, to which their abilities are obviouſly adequate.

No body is ignorant of the ſhare which Roſcius had in Cicero's friendſhip; and it was by the advantage of his precepts and example, that he laid the foundation of his oratorial fame, and improved himſelf in the art of elocution. Roſcius, during the time of his friends exile, repeated ſome verſes on the exile of Telamon, and the ſufferings of Priam, with ſuch deep and ſenſible diſtreſs, that the whole audience perceived to whom he alluded; his very enemies wept, and Cicero was ſoon after recalled from baniſhment. The high value which the Romans ſet upon the

* Roſcius citatior, Æſopus gravior fuit, quod hic in tragedicas, ille in comedias egit.

QUINTILIAN.

the talents of this actor, will appear by the immenſe eſtate he left his ſon, which was valued at two hundred thouſand pounds ſtirling; it was this ſon who, afterwards, in a fit of wantonneſs, diſſolved ſome pearls of great value in his liqour and drank them off.

The ancient actors ſtudied the art of touching the affections with great induſtry, Æopus, we are informed by Plutarch, had wrought himſelf once up to ſuch a tranſport of rage, in repreſenting Atreus deliberating how he ſhould avenge himſelf of Thyeſtes, that he ſtruck one of his ſervants haſtily croſſing the ſtage with his truncheon, and laid him dead on the ſpot.

Polus, another actor of eminence brought the urn of his beloved child on the ſtage, inſtead of the ſuppoſed one of Oreſtes. This filled him with ſuch real grief, as was ſoon ſympathetically felt by his audience. And thus we ſee no expedient was neglected, which could give the performance the greater appearance of reality.

CHAP. IX.

THE MODERN THEATRE, PARTICULARLY THE BRITISH.

When the Roman empire was overwhelmed by the invaſions of the northern nations, when gothic barbarity and monkiſh ignorance darkened the world, the ſtage declined, the muſes withdrew, and polite literature was no more. Then monſtrous fictions of giants, champions, and diſtreſſed damſels, were ſpun out in monaſteries by dreaming monks, and, to the deſtruction of reaſon and common ſenſe, became the moſt favourite amuſements of the people.

The mimi of the Romans were the laſt who quitted the ſtage: and theſe became ſo low and degenerate, as to ſtroll from town to town, repreſenting the moſt contemptible,

and

and low buffooneries; other nations adopted them, and they were well known all over Europe, about the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Moſt of their exhibitions were extempore; and from their talents at ridicule and burleſque, the words mimic and mimicry have been appropriated to all characters of this kind.

In this country they were called mummers, a ſmall change of the word mimi or mimies; they wore maſks, and were otherwiſe diſguiſed, which gave them an opportunity of committing many outrages with impunity; ſo that in the time of Edward 3d. they were ſuppreſſed by authority. Much about this time we may date the introduction of the ſacred myſteries preſented by way of interludes. Theſe were ſubjects borrowed from ſcripture, and were the prevailing taſte of Europe, at that time.

They were in the higheſt reputation here in the reign of Richard 2nd. Henry 4th. and even down to the reign of Henry 8th. In Richard the 2nd's time, the ſcholars of St. Paul's preſented them at a very great expence at Chriſtmas; the pariſh-clarks did the ſame at Skinner's well in 1390; and in 1409 at Clerkenwell, which place obtained its name from their cuſtom of performing there. It is not improbable that theſe repreſentations were almoſt as early as the conqueſt, but interlarded at intervals with the loweſt buffoonery, to amuſe the populace.

The ſubjects of thoſe plays were not always taken from the ſcriptures, but alſo from the miracles ſuppoſed to be wrought by ſaints, confeſſors, and martyrs, in thoſe days of darkneſs and ſuperſtition. They were acted, both in private houſes, and on public ſtages. When one of theſe miracles was to be repreſented, an amphitheatre uſed to be erected in an open field; into which devils, fools, &c. were introduced much like the ancient *ſatyrae*, and theſe unaccountable medleys were the entertainments of the country people, who reſorted hither from all parts.

The ſtupidity, as well as profanity, of thoſe religious repreſentations, was the occaſion of their ſuppreſſion, to theſe ſucceeded myſteries, which had ſomething of a more regular form and meaning. They were allegorical repreſentations of the virtues and vices of the mind, and with them common ſenſe and poetry began to dawn upon the world. The provincial poets were the firſt refiners of the French language, and gave the firſt hints of reformation to the drama. The French, Spaniards, and other nations, had poets of the like kind, who celebrated their national heroes in their paſtoral ſonnets, and perhaps compoſed the poetry of thoſe myſteries. They were not aboliſhed in Europe till about the ſixteenth century; at which time learning and the polite arts were revived in Italy, under the culture and influence of the family of the Medicis, whoſe polite taſte directed that of the public to whatever was beautiful.

At the time of the reformation were certain dramatic moral repreſentations ſo contrived, as to influence and coincide with the prevailing opinions of the times; this might have been the occaſion of a law enacted in Henry the Eighth's time, to reſtrain the liberties they took in ſtriking at the newly received doctrine. The performers of thoſe pieces had no regular eſtabliſhment; they reſorted to nobleman's palaces, and private houſes, and the pieces themſelves were ſo diſpoſed, as that five or ſix perſons could repreſent a great variety of characters. They were in vogue even in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and Shakſpeare has made ſeveral ſatyrical alluſions to them in his plays.

Thus, the Britiſh ſtage, like the ancient, had almoſt the ſame rude beginnings, and it continued in a ſtate of imperfection till the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth, when Shakſpeare and Jonſon aroſe, the glories of their age and nation. The firſt by the fence of Heaven-born genius, and the other with the moſt conſummate learning and art,

almoſt

almoſt all at once raiſed the ſtage to ſuch dignity and perfection as has never ſince been equalled.

Under the influence of this excellent princeſs, learning and the polite arts flouriſhed along with the ſtage.

The eſteem which ſhe had for the drama contributed not a little to its advancement in her reign. She was the firſt who reduced its profeſſors into a more regular company, and digniſied them with privileges that brought them into higher eſtimation than ever, and ſet them far above the contempt of their puritanical cenſurers. They were called her majeſty's ſervants and ſworn comedians. And ſo prevalent was now the theatrical taſte, that many noblemen and private gentlemen entertained companies of comedians for their own private entertainmens.

The children of St. Paul's ſchool, who performed the myſteries in 1578, and the pariſh clerks, who performed about twelve years afterwards, are the earlieſt companies we read of; the children of St. Paul's are ſaid to have continued acting (thoſe moralities I ſuppoſe) down to the year 1618, long after tragedy and comedy were introduced.

Mr Richard Edwards was proprietor of the firſt company under the children of the chapel. The children of the revels after them became very famous: and moſt of Shakſpeare's and Johnſon's plays were firſt performed by them. So univerſal was a theatrical inclination at that time, that plays were acted, not only by the regular companies already mentioned, but by private gentlemen, ſtudents in the Univerſity, Inns of Court, and even by the London 'prentices.

There were ſeventeen play houſes built in different parts of the town, from the years 1570, to 1630, and all filled with different companies. Thoſe in Blackfriars, Saliſbury-court, and the Cockpit, were covered, and pieces acted in them by candle-light: the others were open at top (like the antient theatres) and their repre-

ſentations made by daylight. Our anceſtors were ſo early in timeing both their buſineſs and diverſion, that they began to act about four in the afternoon, and had done early in the night.

At that time mere force of genius ſupported the ſtage; for, in Shakſpeare's time it was quite undecorated, and had only a blanket or curtain of courſe linſey-wolſey cloth, which when drawn up, diſcovered nothing extraordinary. The walls, at beſt, were hung with old Tapeſtry, and ſometimes they were but plainly matted; ſo the audience were obliged to ſupply the place of the ſcene by the ſtrength of imagination alone.

It is probable that the low prices of the theatre prevented its decoration at that time. Thoſe inimitable authors could not be ignorant of the pomp of the ancients; yet as the plain honeſty of the age was ſufficiently delighted more with language and ſentiment than ſhew, the authors and managers looked no farther; and both parties were ſatisfied.

This was the ſtate of the ſtage in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James the Firſt; but when Charles the Firſt came in, he, being a prince of a melancholy, auſtere temper, did not give much attention to the improvement of the theatre; and choſe maſks and moral repreſentations, or more innocent entertainments. Being an exquiſite judge of painting and muſic, he ſpared no expence of either, when they were exhibited at court. The following, among others, were performed at that time:

Coelum Britannicum, a Maſque, wrote by Carewe, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, ſet to muſic by Mr Lawes, and performed by Charles the Firſt, and his court, at Whitehall in 1633.

The Viſion of the twelve Goddeſſes, by Daniel. Performed

formed by the Queen and her ladies at Hampton-Court, 1623.

Luminalia; or, the Feſtival of Light. A Maſque, performed on Shrove-Tueſday night, by the Queen and her ladies, 1637.

Sir Wm. Davenant's Temple of Love, performed at Whitehall, by Queen Henrietta, the Marchioneſs of Hamilton, Counteſs of Oxford, Duke of Lenox, Earls of Newport, Deſmond, &c.

The ſcenery and machinery were contrived by that celebrated artiſt Inigo Jones.

The troubles and confuſions of this prince's reign, and above all, the hypocritical ſeverity of the fanatics, who had obtained but too much influence in the public affairs, ſoon ſuppreſſed and ſilenced the ſtage.

During the Commonwealth, the players were perſecuted and diſperſed: they had no other livelihood but by going five or ſix in a party, and performing ſelect ſcenes out of the moſt celebrated plays at Gentlemen's houſes. Theſe ſcenes were afterwards collected, and publiſhed in one volume in 1670, by one Francis Kirkman, who had been one of thoſe itinerant actors, under the name of Witts, or Sport upon Sport. One was called the Humours of the lame Commonwealth.---This is only the ſcene out of the Royal Merchant, where the beggars chuſe a king.—Another, the Grave-maker, which was the firſt and ſecond ſcenes of the fifth act of Hamlet. Mr Cox, the comedian, compoſed ſeveral new ones, which he added to this collection. He was the principal actor in thoſe pieces, and performed at Oxford, during the uſurpation, with very great applauſe.

The only entertainments which were exhibited at that time in London, were Operas. Sir Wm Davenant, notwithſtanding the diſlike which thoſe in power had to dramatic entertainments, had intereſt enough to have theſe

permitted,

permitted. They conſiſted of declamation and muſic. The words were of his own compoſition, and may be found in his works; the muſic by Coleman and Laws, two eminent maſters, and were performed at Rutland Houſe: After tolerable ſucceſs there, he removed to the Cockpit in Drury-lane. One of them entitled, "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru, expreſſed by vocal and inſtrumental muſic, and by art of perſpective in Scenes, repreſented daily at the Cockpit in Drury-lane, at Three in the afternoon punctually, 1658." This is ſaid to have been read and approved of by Cromwell; as it contained ſome very ſevere ſtrokes on the Spaniards, with whom he was at variance.

When the gloom of civil diſſention was cleared up, monarchy and the ſtage were reſtored together. The ſcattered remnants of ſix play-houſes, which had ſubſiſted in Charles the Firſt's time, were then formed into one company, and acted for the firſt time at the Red Bull play-houſe, in St John's ſtreet. They afterwards built another in Clare-ſtreet, Clare-market; in both which places they acted from 1660, to 1663

About this time, Mr. Thomas Killegrew obtained a patent from the King for erecting a company of Comedians, who were thenceforward called His Majeſty's Company of Comedians, and acted under Mr Killegrew's directions at Drury Lane.

Previous to this, in 1659, Mr Rhodes, a Bookſeller, at Charing-croſs, who had been formerly wardrobe keeper to King Charles Iſt's comedians, in Blackfriars, had obtained a licence to ſet up a company of players at the ſame place. Thoſe celebrated actors, Betterton and Kynaſton (who were his apprentices) performed at this theatre; the former in men's, the latter in women's parts. And Sir Wm. Davenant having obtained a patent for erecting a company under the title of the Duke of York's

Company,

Company, took Mr Betterton and all that remained of Mr Rhodes's Company into it. In 1663, he opened his theatre in Lincoln's Inn-fields, with a tragedy of his own writing, called the Siege of Rhodes, where the ſtage was firſt improved by ſcenery. Both theſe companies were under the patronage of the King and the Duke, and greatly encouraged by the public. By a private agreement, theſe companies were never to act the ſame play at both houſes, which muſt have added greatly to the entertainment of the town. But Davenant finding that Killegrew's company had better performers, and met with greater ſucceſs, was reſolved to rival them by feaſting the eye and ear, independent of the underſtanding. Dramatic operas were now for the firſt time introduced; and in them were united all the elegancies of muſic and painting.

Downes tells us, this company continued acting at Lincoln's Inn-fields till 1671; but this theatre not proving ſufficiently commodious, they built a very elegant one in Dorſet Garden. Mr Betterton, while this theatre was building, went over to France, by the direction of K. Charles II. to take a view of their ſcenery and machinery; and on his return very much improved the Engliſh ſtage in both. Theſe expenſive decorations obliged Sir William from that time to raiſe the prices of admittance. The boxes which were formerly but half a crown, he raiſed to four ſhillings; the pit from eighteen pence to half a crown; the firſt gallery from a ſhilling to eighteen pence; and the upper gallery from ſixpence to a ſhilling.

The principal actors in Killegrew's company growing old, and the audiences declining, the two companies united in 1686.

The actors of Killegrew's company were as follows: The famous Mr Lacy, (who was an excellent low comedian,

edian, and ſo pleaſing to king Charles II. that he had his picture drawn in three ſeveral characters, which are now at Windſor: his principal character was Falſtaff) Bird, Buſt, Cartwright, Clun, Shatterwell, Kynaſton, Winterſel, Griffin and Goodman. The women were, Mrs Marſhall, Uphill, James Rutter, Knight, Bootel, and the celebrated Nell Gwin. In Mr Rhodes's company were Betterton, Sheppy, Lovell, Underhill, R. Noakes, Turner, Dixon; and the following men performed womens parts, viz. Kynaſton, J. Noakes, Wm. Betterton, Angel Moſely, Floyd, &c. To this company Sir Wm. Davenant added Harris, Price, Richards, Smith, Blaiſden, Sanford, Medbourn, Young, Norris; and women, Mrs Davenport, Sanderſon, Davis, Long, Gibbs, Norris, Holden, and Jennings.

It is ſomewhat ſurpriſing, that till this time women were never brought upon the ſtage. Had there been a Cibber or a Pritchard in thoſe days, we might have expected that their inimitable performances would have excited the authors to draw their female characters in a more extenſive manner, which would have added greatly to the excellence of the Drama.

CHAP. X.

BRITISH ACTORS FROM QUEEN ELIZABETH TO THE RESTORATION.

AS the materials we are furniſhed with relative to theſe old theatrical worthies, are ſo few and imperfect, it cannot be expected an exact character can be given either of their excellencies or imperfections; and had it been cuſtomary with the firſt dramatic authors, to annex the

the players names to the parts they perform, we might form a tolerable judgment of them. It would have been alſo a ſatisfaction to the world, to have known to whom the principal characters were entruſted, and particularly what parts were performed by our immortal genius, Shakſpeare, while he continued on the ſtage.

Such of them whoſe merits diſtinguiſhed them among their cotemporaries, and obtained thoſe high applauſes from our forefathers, (who were no indifferent judges) were as follow,

Burbage ſtands foremoſt in the liſt of actors prefix'd to Shakſpeare's plays, publiſhed by Hemings and Condell; and the excellent character which has been handed down to us of him, requires that here alſo he ſhould be firſt mentioned. Flecknoe wrote a parallel between Burbage and Hart.

Sir Richard Baker ſays of him and Allen, "that they were two ſuch actors as no age muſt ever look to ſee the like." His epitaph preſerved by Campden, is only *Exit Burbage*, a laconic compliment of equal honour to him in his profeſſion of actor, as that of "O rare Ben Johnſon!" is to the latter as a poet. He was the original Richard 3d. and was joined with Shakſpeare, Fletcher, Hemings and Condell, in the licence granted by king James 1ſt. to act plays in any part of England.

Lowin, as Downs tells us, was the original Henry 8th. and as he was taught it by Shakſpeare, muſt have done it to the greateſt advantage. He afterwards became Sir William Davenant's favourite actor; and from what that gentleman recollected of his performance, he entruſted Mr. Betterton, who uſed often to acknowledge that he was indebted for all the applauſe he had received in that character, to Sir William's friendly hints.—Lowen was very excellent in comedy, particularly in the characters of Moroſe, Volpone, Mammon, and Falſtaff. In the latter part of his life, he kept the Three Pigeons, an inn at

Brentford, and died in advanced age and great poverty, neglected and forgot by thoſe whom he had often delighted in his days of perfection. He is ſaid to have been a favourite of Maſſinger, and one of the principal actors in his plays. In a copy of verſes before the tragedy of the Roman Actor, by Maſſinger, he pays the following compliment to the author:

Then, (gentle friend) I ſhould not bluſh to bee,
Rank'd 'mongſt thoſe worthy ones, which here I ſee
Uſhering this work, but why I write to thee
Is to profeſſe our love's antiquitie
Which to this tragedie muſt give my teſt,
Thou haſt made many good, but this thy beſt.

Joſeph Taylor performed Paris the tragedian, in this play he is mentioned as an actor of great merit; and was the original Hamlet of the author's inſtruction. Mr Betterton was alſo inſtructed in this character by Sir William Davenant, who remembered Taylor; and to theſe hints was owing that he always performed it with uncommon applauſe. Taylor was alſo very excellent in Iago: the only comic characters which we learn of his performance, were *True wit*, in the ſilent woman, and *Face*, in the Alchymiſt. The author of the Jew of Malta, ſays, that Maſon (another great performer) and Taylor, performed their parts with excellence beyond conception: he died at Richmond. The high opinion which theſe two actors were held in, may be inferred from theſe lines, in a ſatire againſt Ben Johnſon.

Let Lowin ceaſe, and Taylor ſcorn to touch
The loathed ſtage, ſince thou haſt made it ſuch.

Allen, ſays Baker in his chronicle, "was as much valued for his honeſty, as for his abilities in his profeſſion;" he built a theatre called the Fortune, acquired a good eſtate and died in 1620. The following epitaph was intended for him;

Here

Here lies EDWARD ALLEN, the ROSCIUS of his age, who, as he outacted all others, outacted himſelf before his death, by erecting DULWICH COLLEGE in Surry.

We are told he deſigned this college for ſix men and ſix women, ſuperannuated perſons who belonged to the London theatres, with ſix of their children; but one of the managers refuſing to admit a perſon to be door-keeper whom he recommended, he converted his bounty another way, increaſed the number of children to twelve, to be maintained and educated there, from the age of four to fifteen, directed the governor ſhould be a batchelor, and one of his own name, with a warden and four fellows. The college is a noble building, with a handſome chapel and elegant altar-piece, well painted, and a fine organ, with beautiful improvements.

The Jew of Malta is the only part in tragedy, which as far as we can learn, Allen appeared in; the play written by Marloe, a cotemporary actor with Shakſpeare. The author of the prologue to this play, ſays thus of him;

Whom we may rank with (doing no more wrong)
PROTEUS for ſhape, and ROSCIUS for a tongue.

But Ben Johnſon, who never praiſed injudiciouſly, and whoſe great favourite he was, pays him a much higher compliment.

If Rome ſo great, and in her wiſeſt age,
Fear'd not to boaſt the glories of her ſtage,
As ſkilful Roſcius, and grave Æſop, men,
Yet crown'd with honours as with riches then,
Who had no leſs a trumpet of their name
Than Cicero, whoſe very breath was fame:
How can ſo great example die in me,
That Allen I ſhould pauſe to publiſh thee,
Who both their graces in thyſelf haſt more
Outſtript, than they did all that went before;

And

And preſent worth in all doth ſo contract,
As others ſpeak, but only thou doſt act.
Wear this renown: 'tis juſt that who did give
So many poets life by one ſhou'd live.

In the liſt of old dramatic pieces, we find one with this title: *A knack to know a knave*, 1594, ſeveral times acted by E. Allen, with Kempe's applauded merriments of the men of Gotham in receiving the king into Gotham.

Hemings and Condell were two celebrated actors in Shakſpeare's, Johnſon's, and Fletcher's plays, the one in tragedy, the other in comedy; but chiefly known for being the firſt editors of Shakſpeare, ſeven years after his death.

Green was a famous low comedian, and noted for his performance of bubbles in a comedy written by Cooke, who in compliment to him, called it afterwards his *Tu quoque*. Heywood ſays, there was not an actor of his nature in his time of better ability in his performance, more applauded by the audience, of greater grace at court, or of more general love in the city.

Kempe and Tarlton were eminent in their way of low comedy; and particularly excelled in the clowns.—They were both favourites of Queen Elizabeth and their audience: Kempe and Burbage were the Betterton and Nokes of their age; and Sir Richard Baker ſays of Tarleton, that he never had his match, nor never will have. His epitaph preſerved by Campden is thus:

Hic ſitus eſt, cigus actio vox, vultus poſſib
Ex Heraclito reddere Democritum.

Robinſon was eſteemed a capital actor, and muſt have been truly ſo, as the famous Hart was formed by him. He was an actor of great merit, and one of the principal performers in Killigrew's company: he was noted for [illegible] performance of Othello, Brutus and Alexander; in [illegible]s laſt, he appeared with ſuch majeſty and dignity, that one

one of the courtiers of the first rank was pleased to say, he might teach any King on the earth how to comport himself. He also excelled in many parts of comedy, such as *Manly*, Plain Dealer, *Horner* in the Country Wife, *Don John*, *Mosca*, &c. Rhymer, the critic, says thus of him, "That he always pleased, and what he delivered, every one took upon consent; their eyes were prepossessed and charmed at his action, before aught of the poets could approach their ears; and to the most wretched of characters he gave a lustre and brilliancy which dazzled the sight, and the deformities of the poetry could not be perceived. He was a royalist and was killed at the battle of Basinghouse by one of the long eared fanatics, who, after he was taken prisoner and had surrendered his arms, shot him through the head, saying, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently."

He performed the part of Messalina the Roman Empress in a tragedy of that name, wrote by Richards in 1640, and has wrote a copy of verses on the author, which is printed before this play.

These are the most material accounts of the stage and eminent actors of this kingdom, worth mentioning down to the Restoration.

CHAP XI.

The Company divided—Betterton, &c.

We must refer the reader to the conclusion of the ninth chapter, when the two companies united—This union was the means of forming a most complete set of actors; but notwithstanding this, the gains of the patentees were by no means extraordinary. Though the success of two dramatic operas called the *Prophetess*, and *King Arthur*, in which they had embarked all their hopes, was, ap-

parently very great, yet their receipts could not keep them out of a large debt about this time contracted, which furniſhed a twenty years chancery ſuit. It became neceſſary, therefore, to leſſen the charge, and a reſolution was taken to begin with the actors ſalaries. The death of Nokes, Montford and Leigh confirmed this reſolution, for they were conſiderably abated, and it was thought neceſſary to leſſen their pay in proportion to the decline of their audiences: They began with the head performers, ſuppoſing if they ſubmitted, the inferior actors would follow---with this view they gave ſeveral of Betterton's and Mrs Barry's parts to young Powell and Mrs Bracegirdle—this was a very wrong ſtep, for the public was quite unwilling to ſee thoſe characters in the hands of ſuch indifferent players, while there were much better in the company. Betterton, upon this, drew into his party moſt of the valuable actors, who to ſecure their unity, entered with him into a ſort of aſſociation to ſtand or fall together. The patentees alſo formed an aſſociation on their part, and the actors ſided with the party that intereſt or inclination led them to adopt.

During theſe contentions, the actors offered a treaty of peace; but the patentees refuſed all terms of accommodation. In the mean time this diſſention was ſo prejudicial to their affairs, that in a very ſhort time the patent had loſt the getting at leaſt a thouſand pounds by it.

Several perſons of the higheſt diſtinction at length eſpouſed the cauſe of the players, and ſometimes in the circle entertained King William with the ſtate of the theatre—their grievances were ſoon after this redreſſed by the Earl of Dorſet, then lord chamberlain. The learned of the law were adviſed with, and they gave their opinion that no patent for acting plays, &c. could tie up

the

the hands of a ſucceeding prince from granting the like authority, where it might be thought proper to truſt. But while the matter was in agitation, Queen Mary died, which of courſe occaſioned a ceſſation of all public diverſions.

Betterton, in this interim, had more leiſure to ſolicit the redreſs of himſelf and his adherents; while the patentees finding the intereſt in favour of Betterton was daily ſtrengthening, was obliged to make up as good a company as the leavings of Betterton would let them. Betterton had the honour of an audience of the King, who graciouſly diſmiſſed him with an aſſurance of relief and ſupport. Accordingly a ſelect number of them were empowered to act in a ſeparate theatre for themſelves. A theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields was ſoon erected, but not ſoon enough to prevent the patentees opening before them---their houſe, however, excluding the firſt night, was but indifferently attended; and Betterton ſhortly opened a new theatre with a comedy of Congreve's, called *Love for Love*, which run with ſuch extraordinary ſucceſs, that he had ſeldom occaſion to act any other play during the ſeaſon. The reputation of Congreve being then very high, the new managers offered him a whole ſhare on condition he wrote them one new play every year.

This diviſion was in the end detrimental to the intereſt of both parties, but principally to that of the patentees, who were convinced of their error in having provoked their people to a civil war: Quite changed and diſmal now was the proſpect before them, their houſes thin, and the town crouding into a new one, and their actors at double ſalaries, and all this was brought upon them by thoſe their full ſecurity had contemned. In addition to this, the moſt rude and riotous havock was made of all the late dramatic honours of

the theatre; all at once became the ſpoil of ignorance and ſelf conceit---Shakſpere was defaced and tortured in every ſingle character. Nothing ſure could more painfully regret a judicious ſpectator, than to ſee with what confidence thoſe habits, which actors of real merit had left behind them, were worn by giddy pretenders that ſo vulgarly diſgraced them.

The Lincoln's Inn Felds company were in 1693, a commonwealth, like that of Holland, divided from the tyranny of Spain. But the duration of their theatrical power was ſhort: for though ſucceſs poured in ſo faſt upon them at their firſt opening, that every thing ſeemed to ſupport itſelf; yet in a year or two many of them began to make their particular intereſt more their point than that of the general; and though ſome difference might be had to the meaſures and advice of Betterton, ſome of them wanted to rule in their turn; and were often out of humour that their opinion was not regarded. The tragedians ſeemed to think their rank as much ſuperior to the comedians, as in the characters they acted; when the firſt were in their finery, the latter were impatient at the expence, and looked upon as rather laid out on the real than the fictitious perſon of the actor; nay, this ridiculous ſort of regret was carried ſo far, that the tragedian has thought himſelf injured when the comedian pretended to wear a fine coat.

Thus again on the contrary, when Betterton propoſed to ſet off a tragedy, the comedians were ſure to murmer at the charge of it: and Dogget, who had acquired great reputation in Ben, in *Love for Love*, was a principal malecontent on ſuch occaſions; he overvalued comedy for its being nearer to nature than tragedy, and could not with patience look upon the coſtly trains and plumes of the latter, in which knowing himſelf to be uſeleſs, he thought were all a vain extravagance; and when

when he found his ſingularity could no longer oppoſe that expence, he ſo obſtinarely adhered to his own opinion, that he left Betterton's company and went over to the theatre royal. Dogget was ſo immovable in his opinion of whatever he thought was right or wrong, that he could never be eaſy under any kind of theatrical government; and was generally ſo warm in purſuit of his intereſt, that he often outran it: he was, three times, for ſome years unemployed in any theatre, from his not being able to bear in common with others, the diſagreeable accidents that in ſuch ſocieties are unavoidable.— But whatever pretences he had formed for this firſt deſerting from Lincoln's Inn Fields, it was generally thought, his beſt reaſon for it was, that he looked upon it as a ſinking ſhip; not only from the melancholy abatement of their profits, but likewiſe from the neglect and diſorder in their government: He plainly ſaw that their extraordinary ſucceſs at firſt, had made them too confident of its duration, and from thence had ſlackened their induſtry; by which he obſerved at that time, the old houſe, where there was ſcarce any other merit than induſtry, began to floriſh. The provident patentees made a rule which the new houſe had not yet began to follow, viz. never to pay their people when the money did not come in, nor then neither, but in ſuch proportions as ſuited their conveniency. The finances of the other houſe, held it not above one ſeaſon more, before they were reduced to the ſame expedient of making the like ſcanty payments.

Such was the diſtreſs and fortune of both theſe companies ſince their diviſion from the Theatre Royal; either working at half wages, or by alternate ſucceſſes intercepting the bread from one anothers mouths; irreconcilable enemies, yet without hope or relief from a victory on either ſide; ſometimes both parties reduced,

and

and yet, each ſupporting their ſpirits, by ſeeing the other under the ſame calamity.

During this ſtate of the ſtage, it was, that the loweſt expedient was made uſe of to ingratiate the old company in the public favour: The principal patentee, who had ſome time practiſed the law, and therefore loved a ſtorm better than fair weather, took nothing ſo much to heart, as that partiality wherewith he imagined the people of quality had prefered the actors of the other houſe to thoſe of his own: to balance this misfortune, he was reſolved, at leaſt, to be well with their domeſtics, and therefore cunningly opened the upper gallery to them gratis; for before this time no footman was ever admitted or had preſumed to come into it till after the fourth act was ended. This additional privilege, the greateſt plague that ever playhouſe had to complain of, he conceived, would not only incline them to give his company a good word in the family they belonged to, but would naturally incite them to come all hands aloft in the applauſe of the performances: and indeed, it is ſo far ſucceeded, that it often thundered from the full gallery above, while the pit and boxes below were in the utmoſt ſerenity. This riotous privilege, ſo craftily given, and which, from cuſtom, was afterwards ripened into RIGHT, became the moſt diſgraceful nuiſance that ever depreciated the theatre.

CHAP XII.

THE TWO COMPANIES CONTINUED—WILKS, GEORGE, POWELL, &c.

About the diſtreſsful time, above ſpoken of, in the year 1696, Wilks, who now had been five years in great eſteem on the Dublin Theatre, returned to that of Drury Lane

Lane, in which laſt he had firſt ſet out, and had continued to act ſome ſmall parts for one winter only.

In King James's reign he had been ſome time employed in the ſecretary's office in Ireland, and remained in it till after the battle of the Boyne, which completed the Revolution. Upon that happy and unexpected deliverance, the people of Dublin, among the various expreſſions of their joy had a mind to have a play; but the actors being diſperſed during the war, ſome private perſons agreed, in the beſt manner they were able, to give one to the public gratis, at the theatre. The play was *Othello*, in which Wilks acted the Moor; and the applauſe he received in it, warmed him to ſo ſtrong an inclination for the ſtage, that he immediately preferred it to all his other views in life; for he quitted his poſt, and with the firſt fair occaſion came over to try his fortune, in the (then only) company of actors in London. The perſon, who ſupplied his poſt in Dublin, raiſed to himſelf from thence a fortune of fifty thouſand pounds.

Upon his being formerly received into the Theatre Royal, he was not on a very reſpectable footing, his parts were generally ſo inſignificant, that finding very little hope of getting forward, he returned again to Dublin, where, having no competitor, he was immediately preferred to whatever parts his inclination led him, and his early reputation on that ſtage, as ſoon raiſed, in him, an ambition to ſhew himſelf on a better. On the death of Montford, he took a reſolution to return again to England, with the firſt opportunity; but as his engagements to the ſtage where he was, were too ſtrong to be ſuddenly broke from—he did not return to the Theatre Royal till the year 1696.

On his firſt arrival, Powell, who was now in poſſeſſion of all the chief parts of Montford, and the only actor that

ſtood

ſtood in Wilks's way, in ſeeming civility, offered him his choice of whatever part he thought fit to make his firſt appearance in; though in reality the favour was intended to hurt him. But Wilks rightly judged it more modeſt to accept only of a part of Powel's, and which Montford had never acted, that of Palamode in Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode*. Here, too, he had the advantage of having the ball played into his hand by the inimitable Mrs Montford, who was then the Malantha in the ſame play. Whatever fame Wilks had brought with him from Ireland, he as yet appeared but a very raw actor, to what he was afterwards allowed to be—In Palamode, he was ſhort of Powel, and miſſed a good deal of the looſe humour of the character which the other more happily hit. But however, he was young, erect, of a pleaſing aſpect, and in the whole, gave the town and the ſtage ſufficient hopes of him.

Upon the viſible ſucceſs of Wilks, the pretended contempt which Powel had held him in, began to four into an open jealouſy; he, now plainly ſaw he was a formidable rival, and (which more hurt him) ſaw too, that other people ſaw it; and therefore found it high time to oppoſe him. But Wilks, happening to be as jealous of his fame as the other, ſuch claſhing candidates could not be long without a rupture—In ſhort, a challenge came from Powel when he was hot-headed; but the next morning he was cool enough to let it end in favour of Wilks.—Yet however the magnanimity of either part might ſubſide, the animoſity was as deep in the heart as ever, though it was not afterwards ſo openly avowed: for when Powel found that intimidating would not carry his point, but that Wilks, when provoked, would really give battle; he grew ſo out of humour that he cocked his hat, and in his paſſion walked off to the ſervice of the company in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM